



Master's thesis in Geography

Human geography and spatial planning

The Territorial agenda of the EU: what, who, why and how?

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2021

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Master's Programme in Geography

Faculty of Science

Tiedekunta – Fakultet – Faculty		Osasto – Institution – Department	
Faculty of Science		Department of Geosciences and Geography	
Tekijä – Författare – Author			
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Tutkielman otsikko – Avhandlingens titel – Title of thesis			
The Territorial agenda of the EU: what, who, why and how?			
Koulutusohjelma ja opintosuunta – Utbildningsprogram och studieriktning – Programme and study track			
Master's programme in geography, Human and urban geography and spatial planning			
Level of the thesis	Date	Number of pages	
Master's thesis, 30 credits	March 2021	77 pages + annex	
Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract			
<p>Social and economic inequalities are growing in Europe in local, regional and national scales while they are decreasing between member states of the European union (EU). Inequalities are visible in geographical space, which can be one factor explaining these differences between places and people. Spatial disparities and growing inequalities are source of political and social tensions, which can be menace for European countries as well for the EU's legitimacy. These issues are addressed by the EU's territorial cohesion policy.</p> <p>Spatial awakening in policymaking and establishment of territorial cohesion as the third objective of the EU's cohesion policy in 2009 by the Lisbon Treaty has increased awareness of territorial approach in the EU policymaking. The Territorial Agenda of the EU (TAEU) was published in 2007 as a guideline for achieving territorial cohesion. However, studies show that results of this non-binding and open-method-of-coordination based policy have been relatively modest despite its usefulness and ambitious policy objectives of reducing inequalities and increasing overall competitiveness of Europe. Moreover, many meanings of territorial cohesion and lack of a proper definition has been topic of political and academic debates.</p> <p>The key document of territorial cohesion, the Territorial Agenda of the EU was recently renewed by the European network of regional development policymakers and spatial planners. At this context of policy renewal, I am studying what kind of role the Territorial Agenda of the EU has in achieving territorial cohesion, which is the main objective of the agenda. Territorial cohesion is known as a slightly contradictory policy goal, due to its sometimes (but not always) conflicting spatial realities of the two policy objectives: reducing inequalities and increasing competitiveness. Moreover, elusiveness and many meanings of the concept have been seen as the central challenges of the agenda. Meanings of territorial cohesion and associated imaginaries to the EU territoriality are investigated in this thesis. Additional research questions are linked to a policy evaluation, where aspects of effectiveness, impacts and utility are studied.</p> <p>The study is based on an online survey, which targets the Network of the Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP) members and other relevant stakeholders from different geographical scales and levels of governance. The survey is composed by quantitative and qualitative questions which are analysed by mixed methods. Theoretical background originates from social constructionism, Europeanisation and critical geopolitics.</p> <p>Results show that the Territorial Agenda of the EU has a strong role in achieving of territorial cohesion and stakeholders have high expectations of its impact, effectiveness and utility. Overall, the agenda is perceived as a useful guideline with lot of potential for achieving territorial cohesion in Europe. However, some of the stakeholders acknowledge well weaknesses of the agenda and are more realistic about its role, effectiveness, impacts and utility. Moreover, stakeholders share a relatively common understanding of the EU territoriality as networked and relational space. They associate similar meanings to territorial cohesion as a concept, even the concept remains still quite vague. The central finding is that the environmental and social dimensions of territorial cohesion are emphasized over the economic dimension and that strong impacts are expected in environmental related themes.</p> <p>Results illustrate how the EU's soft power works and how even a non-binding low policy of the EU, which is operationalized voluntary by different level stakeholders, can be effective for creating the EU territoriality and achieving territorial cohesion. Processes of Europeanisation and soft practices such as sharing good practice, policy harmonisation, coordination and cooperation are main means to achieve territorial cohesion. Nevertheless, some stakeholders remain realistic and acknowledge the obstacles of non-binding policy implementation and prefer to wait if 'what is ought to be done' 'is actually done' during the next ten years. In addition, the study outlines some policy recommendations to improve the agenda and implementation. For example, stronger engagement of stakeholders, participation of citizens and the third sector and increase of willingness to work as the EU's agency are suggestions to be enforced.</p>			
Keywords			
Territorial Agenda of the EU, territorial cohesion, EU, cohesion policy, critical geopolitics, spatial planning, Europeanisation, European studies			
Where deposited			
University of Helsinki electronic theses library E-thesis/HELDA			
Additional information			

Tiedekunta – Fakultet – Faculty		Osasto – Institution – Department	
Matemaattisluonnontieteellinen tiedekunta		Geotieteiden ja maantieteen laitos	
Tekijä – Författare – Author			
Mervi Hemminki			
Tutkielman otsikko – Avhandlingens titel – Title of thesis			
Euroopan unionin alueellinen agenda: mitä, kuka, miksi ja miten?			
Koulutusohjelma ja opintosuunta – Utbildningsprogram och studieriktning – Programme and study track			
Maantieteen maisteriohjelma, Ihmis- ja kaupunkimaantiede ja alueellinen suunnittelu			
Tutkielman taso – Avhandlingens nivå – Level of the thesis	Aika – Datum – Date	Sivumäärä – Sidoantal – Number of pages	
Pro gradu -tutkielma 30 op	Maaliskuu 2021	77 + liitteet	
Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract			
<p>Sosiaalinen ja taloudellinen eriarvoisuus kasvavat Euroopassa paikallisella, alueellisella ja kansallisella tasolla samaan aikaan, kun erot ovat pienentyneet Euroopan unionin (EU) jäsenmaiden välillä. Eriarvoisuus on nähtävissä maantieteellisessä tilassa, joka voi olla myös yksi selittävä tekijä eriarvoisuudelle alueiden ja ihmisten välillä. Alueelliset erot ja kasvava eriarvoisuus ovat potentiaalisia riskitekijöitä, jotka synnyttävät yhteiskunnallisia ja poliittisia jännitteitä, mikä saattaa uhata niin Euroopan valtioiden vakautta kuin myös EU:n legitimitettiä. EU pyrkii vastaamaan näihin ongelmiin alueellisen koheesion politiikalla.</p> <p>Tilallinen herääminen politiikkanteossa ja alueellisen koheesion virallistaminen koheesiopolitiikan kolmanneksi pilariksi vuonna 2009 Lissabonin sopimuksella ovat lisänneet tietoisuutta alueellisesta lähestymistavasta EU-politiikassa. EU:n alueellinen agenda julkaistiin vuonna 2007 ohjenuoraksi alueelliselle koheesiolle. Tutkimukset kuitenkin osoittavat, että tämän poliittisesti sitomattoman ja avoimeen koordinaatiomenetelmään perustuvan politiikan tulokset ovat olleet heikot, huolimatta sen hyödyllisyydestä ja kunnianhimoisista tavoitteista vähentää eriarvoisuutta ja nostaa EU:n yleistä kilpailukykyä. Lisäksi alueellisen koheesion virallisen määrittelyn puuttuminen ja monet merkitykset ovat olleet poliittisten ja akateemisten debattien kohde.</p> <p>EU:n alueellinen agenda, alueellisen koheesion keskeinen politiikkalinjaus, on vastikään uudistettu eurooppalaisen aluekehityksen päättäjien ja aluesuunnittelijoiden verkoston (NTCCP-verkosto) toimesta. Tutkin tässä uudistuskontekstissa millainen rooli EU:n alueellisella agendalla on sen tavoitteen eli alueellisen koheesion saavuttamisessa. Alueellinen koheesio on tunnettu hiukan ristiriitaisena politiikkatavoitteena, sillä joskus (ei kuitenkaan aina) eriarvoisuuden vähentäminen ja kilpailukyvyn kasvattaminen asettuvat vastakkaisiksi kehityspoluiksi fyysisessä tilassa. Lisäksi termin epämääräisyys ja monet merkitykset ovat keskeinen haaste kyseiselle agendalle. Tässä tutkielmassa kartoitetaan alueellisen koheesion merkityksiä, ja siihen liitettyjä visioita ja Euroopan territoriaalista olemusta, sekä arvioidaan politiikan sisältöä käytännön arvioinnin keinoin.</p> <p>Tutkielma perustuu nettikyselyyn, jolla tavoiteltiin NTCCP-verkoston jäseniä ja muita asianosaisia sidosryhmiä monilta maantieteelliseltä skaaloilta ja hallinnon tasoilta. Kysely koostui kvantitatiivisista ja kvalitatiivisista kysymyksistä, joita analysoitiin monimenetelmätyökalujen keinoin. Sosiaalinen konstruktivismi, europeanisaatio ja kriittinen geopolitiikka muodostavat tutkielman teoreettisen viitekehyksen.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittavat, että EU:n alueellisella agendalla on vahva rooli alueellisen koheesion saavuttamisessa ja että sidosryhmillä on korkeat odotukset agendan vaikutuksista, vaikuttavuudesta ja käytettävyydestä. Kaiken kaikkiaan agenda koetaan hyödyllisenä ohjenuorana, jossa on paljon potentiaalia alueellisen koheesion saavuttamiseksi. Kuitenkin jotkut sidosryhmäläiset tiedostavat hyvin agendan heikkoudet ja ovat kriittisimpiä sen roolista, vaikuttavuudesta, vaikutuksista ja käytettävyydestä. Sidosryhmillä on jokseenkin yhteinen ymmärrys Euroopan tilallisesta luonteesta verkostomaisena ja relationaalisenä tilana. Lisäksi sidosryhmät liittävät alueelliseen koheesioon samanlaisia merkityksiä, vaikka se jääkin edelleen jossakin määrin epämääräiseksi käsitteeksi. Keskeinen löydös on, että alueellisen koheesion ympäristöulottuvuus ja sosiaalinen ulottuvuus korostuvat taloudellisen ulottuvuuden kustannuksella ja että voimakkaita vaikutuksia odotetaan erityisesti ympäristöteemoihin liittyen.</p> <p>EU:n alueellinen agenda on laillisesti sitomaton ja EU:n poliittisella agendalla jokseenkin ”vähäpätöinen” politiikka, jonka toimeenpano perustuu vapaaehtoisuuteen. Tulokset kuitenkin osoittavat miten EU:n pehmeä valta toimii, ja miten merkittävä rooli EU:n alueellisella agendalla voi olla territoriaalisen ulottuvuuden rakentamisessa ja alueellisen koheesion saavuttamisessa. Europeanisaatioprosessit ja pehmeät työkalut, kuten hyvien käytäntöjen jakaminen, politiikkojen harmonisointi, koordinointi ja yhteistyö, ovat keinoja, joilla alueellinen koheesio voidaan saavuttaa. Kuitenkin jotkut sidosryhmäläiset ovat realistisia ja tiedostavat tällaisen laillisesti sitomattoman politiikan toimeenpanon ongelmat ja kokevat paremmaksi ideaksi odottaa toteutuvatko suunnitellut seuraavan kymmenen vuoden aikana. Lisäksi tutkielmassa tehdään joitakin politiikkasuosituksia, joilla voitaisiin parantaa agendan sisältöä ja toimeenpanoa. Sidosryhmien kannustaminen vapaaehtoiseen toimeenpanoon, kansalaisten ja kolmannen sektorin osallistaminen sekä poliittisen halun lisääminen toimintaan EU:n toimeenpanevana agenttina, ovat esimerkkejä toimenpiteistä, joiden avulla EU:n alueellista agendaa voitaisiin vahvistaa parempien tulosten saavuttamiseksi.</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords			
EU:n alueellinen agenda, alueellinen koheesio, EU, koheesiopolitiikka, kriittinen geopolitiikka, aluesuunnittelu, europeanisaatio, Eurooppatutkimus			
Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited			
University of Helsinki electronic theses library E-thesis/HELDA			
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information			

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List of Abbreviations

CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
COR	Committee of regions
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban policy
DG TC	Meeting of Directors-General for Territorial Cohesion
EESC	European economic and social committee
EC	European Commission
EGTC	European grouping on Territorial Cohesion
ESDP	European Spatial Planning perspective
ESPON	European Spatial planning observation network
EU	European Union
INTERREG	Series of programmes funded by the EU's regional development fund
NTCCP	The Network of the Territorial Cohesion Contact Points
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics, 3 levels: 1,2,3
OMC	open method of coordination
TAEU	The Territorial Agenda of the EU

1. Introduction

Imaginaries and visions such as the blue banana, Europe of grapes, petites Europes and Europe of regions has been used for describing spatiality of the European Union (EU). It has been also linked to a question of European economic competitiveness and cohesion. Economic inequalities have decreased amongst the EU member states between 1980-2005 (Medeiros, 2016). Despite this, economic inequalities have grown by 30% between the urban and rural European regions between 1980 and 2016. This increase of regional disparities is linked to a concentration of economic wealth in core areas and backwardness of peripheral areas. (Mykhenko & Wolff, 2018.) As a consequence, these diverging development paths and spatial disparities have become a potential source of political and social tensions in Europe (Iammarino, Rodriguez-Pose & Storper, 2019, 273–274.) which the EU addresses by cohesion policy.

Spatial imaginaries are linked to economy, for example to a fear of Europe losing its position in the global competition. As a solution, European countries together, through the integration, join forces to overcome the issue of competitiveness and maintain their position in the global competition. This has been turned into imagination of the EU as a territory of wealth and knowledge-based society. This economic, social and spatial imaginary has been associated with the European integration since the 1990s. (see e.g. Moisio, 2011, 20-21; Luukkonen & Moisio, 2016, 456; Moisio, 2018, 146.)

The EU's cohesion policy, also known as regional policy, aims to address issues of spatial disparities and economic competitiveness which are embodied in the idea of territorial cohesion. It is a remarkable redistribution policy, being the second biggest policy allocation with 371 billion euros or 34% of the EU's long-term budget for 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2020a). The European Commission (EC) is the central supranational actor and policymaker, which holds the coffer key of funds used for the cohesion policy.

In common language the policy is referred as a redistribution or investment policy depending on what kind of justification is more convenient. Justifications of territorial cohesion policy may come from economic efficiency, spatial justice or solidarity. (Weckroth & Moisio, 2020.) Lately, social inclusion and equality of chances, in other words the social sensitiveness, has replaced the two economically oriented references. However, this social aspect is still quite vague and

Weckroth & Moisis (2020) propose that inclusion of the idea of spatial justice and well-being of people could improve the policy.

Territorial cohesion is the newest priority, which was added into the cohesion policy priorities in order to coordinate the two other objectives, economic and social cohesion in 2013 (European Commission, 2020b, 2). The Territorial Agenda of the EU (TAEU) was published in 2007 as a guiding document for territorial cohesion, which strives for balanced development and increasing competitiveness of the EU (European Commission, 2020c). Activities of spatial planning are dispersed in several policy fields and only part of it is taken forward under the flag of the territorial cohesion policy despite the fact that territorial cohesion became an official objective of the union by the ratification of the Lisbon treaty in 2009. (Faludi, 2009.) Thus, the Territorial Agenda of the EU remains informal and non-binding policy due to the shared competence between member states and the union. Main issues for having a European level spatial planning are lack of competence and member states' sovereignty over their territories and the 'subsidiarity principle' in other words, better coherence of planning at national level. Therefore, the Territorial agenda of the EU is not always taken seriously as a political agenda. (Faludi, 2009, 3.)

Furthermore, even the name of the EU's territorial agenda is only an 'agenda'. It can hence be considered as a list of issues that policymakers give serious attention to at certain moment at a certain political system (Lelieveldt & Prince, 2015, 209; Baumgartner, 2015, 363). Implementation is voluntary and based on open method of coordination (OMC) (Faludi, 2006). Moreover, the meaning of territorial cohesion has been debated amongst academics and politicians (see e.g. Medeiros, 2016; Fischer & Sykes, 2009; Faludi, 2009; Luukkonen & Moilanen, 2012; European Commission, 2008). For these reasons, the objective of reducing social and economic inequalities and increasing competitiveness are quite ambitious policy goals for the Territorial agenda of the EU. Despite this, the Territorial Agenda of the EU is supported by the ministers in responsible spatial planning and regional development, who recently worked on the renewal process of the Territorial agenda of the EU 2030 (TEM, 2019). Also, the European Parliament has expressed their support for the agenda (Faludi, 2009, 13).

Many EU policies are spatially blind since they approach the EU as continuous spatial unit by proposing one fits for all policies (Luukkonen & Moisis, 2016, 457). Thus, one of the main strengths of the TAEU is the territorial approach into policymaking, policy coordination and cooperation between levels and scales which are embodied in the concept of territorial cohesion

(European Commission, 2008; European Commission, *unknown date*). Even though spatial planning might be a policy field where the EU has only soft power, linkages to the cohesion policy and cohesion funds give it certain ‘economic relevance’ that can motivate to implementing the TAEU.

Furthermore, the TAEU aims to overcome wider challenges that the union faces such as climate change, demographic imbalances, unemployment, quality of life and energy security. Hence, the agenda is not limited only in themes of spatial planning. There are pilot actions related to the two priorities of the renewed TAEU: Just and Green Europe. (Spatial Foresight on behalf of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion, 2020a.) Moreover, linkages to other policy initiatives such as the Green Deal, Just Transition Mechanism and Recovery plan for Europe are potential companions that may deliver to the TAEU objectives (see e.g. Spatial Foresight for the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion, 2020a&b; European Commission, 2020d). Even the TAEU might remain as ‘low politics’ of the EU (Faludi, 2009), cohesion policy is receiving the biggest allocation for the next multiannual financial framework 2021–2027 in total 377.8 billion euros (European Commission, 2020a&c). Thus, there are chances that the new Territorial agenda of the EU 2030 will get more attention and political relevance.

Moreover, status and political importance of the cohesion policy depends on the European Commission and Commissioners plans (Waterhout, 2011, 85; Faludi, 2009). Also, defining clear policy goals is essential for making effective public policies. For example, Polvelari & Bachtler (2005, 40) argue that territorial cohesion as an undefined policy objective risks its operationalization, which may occur as incoherent and diverging implementation and outcomes. To avoid this, serious effort has been done to define and operationalise the concept by the new TAEU, which includes also pilot actions. As Böhme & Lürer (2016, 19), (*also, researchers working for the Spatial Foresight*) aptly formulate in their article about the Europe’s territorial future:

“vision without actions are daydreams. Knowledge about the picture of a desirable future is meaningless if the decision-makers and other players have no understanding or imagination how they can implement single actions necessary to realise this future.” p.19

“Actions without visions risk to become nightmares. If the decision-makers have a wide understanding of different unrelated short-term actions, policy formulation and implementation will become chaotic. People in driver’s seat need to have a common idea, say a compass that provides them with orientation and guides them.” p.19

Thus, the future of European territories and territorial cohesion really depends on how stakeholders interpret the content of the TAEU and what meaning they give for territorial cohesion. Moreover, finding actors that are willing to implement the agenda is the main factor of uncertainty for achieving the objectives. Also, social and geopolitical imaginaries have a central role in orienting our actions and ways of understanding of the world. Therefore, it is a good starting point to research imaginaries that stakeholders have about the EU territoriality and society.

1.1. Setting the research problem and objectives

The Network of the Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP) is composed by member states' officials of spatial planning and regional development, the EC, trusteeships and interest groups such as Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and Committee of regions (COR). The TAEU editorial group is rather dominated by an EU lead top-down 'elite' approach (Waterhout, 2011, 88) where the up-coming and recent presidencies of the council of the EU, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban policy (DG REGIO), CEMR and COR draft the agenda with assistance of consultant company (*called Spatial Foresight for the current renewal project*). The Territorial agenda of the EU emphasizes place-based approach, multi-level governance, networks and participatory approach, which engages stakeholders in horizontal and vertical cooperation. However, slightly paradoxically mainly ministerial officials in charge of territorial policies in member states and officials from the EC have participated in developing the agenda. Hence, it might be that the expected actors putting in practice the agenda understand and interpret it differently.

As mentioned in the introduction, meaning of territorial cohesion lacks a clear definition which risks the TAEU of being elusive. Therefore, it is interesting to test if the concept remains elusive according to the participating stakeholders. More precisely aim is to investigate if they have relatively similar 'common understanding of the agenda' and if they are willing to take it forward and act as an EU agency. Moreover, I am looking for implications of the TAEU as a process, which works by mechanism of Europeanisation. Similar studies (see eg. Moisio, 2011, Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015), have indicated such findings whereby the European regional policy is linked to processes of Europeanisation, which consists constant defining, re-defining, re-working and re-production of European territoriality.

Despite the increasing attention to territorial dimension of policymaking, the territorial cohesion policy remains still ‘low’ politics of the EU and its implementation is based on open method of coordination. This means that the policy is formed at the EU-level and implementation is in hands of member states and completely voluntary due to the non-binding nature of the policy. Also, Lelieveldt & Prince (2015, 181) place regional policy in the strong EU involvement policy area and spatial planning rather in the weak EU involvement policy area. The Territorial agenda of the EU is placed somewhere between the two through its linkages to both cohesion policy and spatial planning. However, Moisio (2011, 36) argues that the network of the EU spatial planning embodies somewhat the power of the EC in producing EU-wide agendas, although they are not binding supranational configurations, it is actually these networks of spatial planning that give content in the ‘European’ territorial vision. Thus, the process of European spatial planning revolves around and includes complex actor engagement and power relations.

From this perspective, I am interested in studying what meaning and spatial imaginaries stakeholders associate into the concept of territorial cohesion, which is the main policy goal of the TAEU. Furthermore, I am interested in researching how different level stakeholders understand the role of the Territorial agenda of the EU in achieving territorial cohesion and what kind of expectations they have on its effectiveness, impacts and utility. The research is topical, since the Territorial agenda of the EU was currently renewed and the new TAEU was published December 1st in 2020. Also, Moisio, (2011, 35) has proposed that the ‘EU-sponsored’ networks of spatial planning could be studied more because there are some indications that these EU sponsored networks are not perceived as EU projects even, they receive EU funding, but rather as opportunity to overcome national hierarchies and bureaucracy by acting in European scale. The case of TAEU is even more complex, it should not be confused to be an EU document, even if it reminds remarkably of those. Rather it can be linked into the ongoing and open-ended process of Europeanisation.

The thesis is based on an online survey, which permits stakeholders from different member states, levels of governance and spatial scales to participate in the study. Aim is to investigate these particular research questions and additionally create an opportunity for various stakeholders to participate into the EU’s regional development politics by giving them a voice through this study. The study starts from questions *who, what, how and why*. Moreover, aim is to analyse weaknesses and strengths of the agenda, which can be useful input for improving the agenda. Even though, the renewal process has ended, the results of this thesis can be useful for implementation and further development of the agenda.

1.2. Internship at the Finnish ministry of the Environment

Through my internship at the Ministry of the Environment, I have had the possibility to participate in the NTCCP and meetings of Directors-General for Territorial Cohesion (DG TC) where the TAEU 2030 was discussed and renewed. It was through this internship whereby I became curious about the EU's territorial cohesion policy and decided to do my thesis on the topic. The general opinion at the NTCCP meetings has been that big changes are not needed for the new TAEU 2030, since the old TAEU 2020 is still a relevant guideline for the EU's territorial development. The renewal process happens in open discussion in the meetings of the NTCCP and DG TC members where participants share their views and discuss about the content of the agenda. The drafting of the TAEU is externalized for a consultant company called Spatial Foresight. Thus, experts of the Spatial Foresight do the drafting of TAEU after comments of the NTCCP and DG TC members who mainly represent member states, the EU institutions and other non-governmental organizations active in the field of regional politics. The draft of the new TAEU 2030 was sent for a stakeholder consultation and a survey research was conducted to collect their comments on the draft document December 2019 – January 2020.

At the same time, I had the possibility to conduct my study in cooperation with the Finnish Ministry of the Environment. The aim of my research is to study how different level stakeholders see the role of TA for achieving the territorial cohesion. Also, it is a perfect opportunity to do a critical overview what is expected from the new Territorial Agenda 2030 and what kind of challenges and priorities are chosen for the 2020s. Another motive is to research how the EU-level policy is perceived in different levels of governance and in different geographical scales, and what kind of future vision stakeholders have for the EU territories. In order to answer these questions, my study focuses on the expected effectiveness, impact and utility of the new Territorial Agenda 2030.

1.3. Research questions and hypotheses

Q1: What meanings and imaginaries stakeholders associate into territorial cohesion through the renewal process of the TAEU?

Q2: How stakeholders see role of the TAEU in achieving territorial cohesion and what are stakeholders' expectations for impact, effectiveness and utility of the TAEU 2030?

I hypothesize that there are differences in understanding of the territorial cohesion and role of the territorial cohesion amongst stakeholders. These differences can be explained by background

variables such as level of governance, policy field of the stakeholder, engagement in the EU networks and familiarity of the TAEU.

Secondly, I hypothesize that expectations for impact, effectiveness and utility of the TAEU are modest due to the non-binding nature of the document. Results are rather linked to a process of Europeanisation such as sharing good practices, policy harmonization, common learning and cooperation & coordination (thus, to the open method of coordination).

1.4. Structure of the thesis

In the following section I introduce the main policy terms and central scholarly concepts. This is followed by the theoretical framework of my study. This framework is followed by a section on methodology. After these methodological notes, I conduct empirical analysis. I close the thesis with some reflections regarding my master's thesis work and the analysis and insights.

2. Central policy terms and scholarly concepts

In this section, I am presenting the background of my study and defining the central terms and concept of the research: territorial cohesion, Territorial agenda of the EU, social imaginary, stakeholders and open method of coordination.

2.1. Territorial cohesion policy

This section is composed of four chapters: territorial cohesion, the Territorial agenda of the EU, renewal of the TAEU and open method of coordination.

2.1.1. Territorial cohesion

Territorial cohesion is one of the three pillars of cohesion policy with the social and economic cohesions. It became objective of the union by ratification of the Lisbon treaty in 2009. However, the treaty mentions territorial cohesion very briefly and there is no official definition of the term available. In 2008, the European Commission published a Green Paper on territorial cohesion, which describes territorial cohesion as harmonious development of places by reducing inequalities between places and people, increase of European competitiveness by turning territorial diversity into an asset and coordination of public policies to address common issues jointly. (European Commission, 2008.) This description emphasizes spatial differences, aims for balanced development and turning territorial capital into economic growth. A Green Paper as a political document, is meant for discussion and outlining issues and options, not for giving any specific proposals for an issue or defining it (Lelieveldt & Prince, 2015, 220). Thus, the definition of territorial cohesion remains open and it can be understood in various ways. Waterhout (2011, 92) criticizes the Green Paper for being a disappointing document, because it aims to discuss the topic instead of proposing any definition of the term. Also, Polvelari & Bachtler (2005, 40) argue that territorial cohesion as undefined policy objective risks its operationalization, which may occur as incoherent and diverging implementations.

The consultant company Spatial Foresight is commissioned for drafting the new territorial agenda 2030 on behalf of the BMI (German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community) and BBSR (German Federal Institute for Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development). They work in close cooperation with the NTCCP network. In the TAEU 2030 territorial cohesion is defined as follows:

“It means promoting balanced and harmonious territorial development between and within countries, regions, cities and municipalities, as well as ensuring a future for all places and people in Europe, building on the diversity of places and subsidiarity. It enables more equal opportunities, including access to public services for people and enterprises, wherever they are located. At urban scale these aspects are addressed in the New Leipzig Charter. Territorial cohesion reinforces solidarity to promote convergence and reduce inequalities between better-off places and those with less prosperous prospects or that are lagging behind. Territorial cohesion helps all places to perform as well as possible using their own assets through place-based investment. This benefits Europe as a whole and each individual country.” (Spatial Foresight on behalf of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion, 2020a, 2)

Thus, territorial cohesion is conceptualised in the new TAEU in similar way with the Green Paper. Although there is a slight difference visible, a turn of emphasizing solidarity over competitiveness. However, this definition still leaves room for diverse interpretations of the concept, which seems to be the goal also in the TAEU 2030. Böhme & Gløersen (2011, 3) argue that it is an impossible task to define the concept and by doing so it would risk losing one of its dimensions and meanings that different stakeholders might associate to it. Therefore, it is more fruitful to leave some freedom for the stakeholder’s personal interpretations.

Origins of territorial cohesion are in several theoretical backgrounds such as economic geography, economic and endogenous development, local development, geographical handicaps for regional development, sustainable development and European governance (see e.g. Böhme & Gløersen 2011; Medeiros, 2016). Thus, territorial cohesion embodies many storylines and possibilities for defining it. Also, Weckroth & Moisio (2020, 3) argue that there is no single definition of territorial cohesion and it is constantly re-defined, re-worked and re-spatialized. Thus, stakeholders involved in the renewal process of the TAEU are engaged in such practices.

Previous studies (see e.g. Jones et al. 2019; Marques, Saraiva, Santinha & Guerra, 2018) show that the concept can be contradictory and sometimes contested due to its complex spatial dimensions. According to Jones et al. (2019, 104) “--In both EU policy documents and academic debates, it is not always clear whether the concept refers to a policy objective that is pursued through a particular policy means or whether territorial cohesion is the policy tool or technology itself that is

used to achieve certain policy goals.” This elusiveness and ambiguousness of the concept may risk effectiveness of the policy. For example, evaluation studies of cohesion policy programs have shown that a loose definition or too many objectives, lack of coordination and resources for proper implementation have led to ineffectiveness of cohesion policies (see e.g. Bachtler, Berkowitz, Hardy, & Muravska, 2017). Other difficulty is related to the abstract nature of territorial cohesion which makes it difficult to translate it into measurable indicators (see e.g. Medeiros, 2016).

Complexity of territorial cohesion can be illustrated by focusing on ideas of cohesion and competitiveness which are embodied in the concept. There is a risk of paradox related to the idea of balanced competitiveness, for example Tewdwr-Jones (2011) argue that cohesion and competitiveness might be contradictory objectives due to tension between political objective and economic and spatial realities of these. Cohesion refers to harmonizing uneven geographical development and economic concentration. Competitiveness is related to economic growth, which might have negative impacts for balanced territorial development due to the concentration of prosperity into urban areas. (Tewdwr-Jones, 2011, 69.) This illustrates how territorial cohesion embodies the risk of being contradictory policy goal if these ideas are not contextualized in specific needs of regions and seen in coherent scales, in other words approached by a place-based or place-sensitive approach. When there are countless ways of understanding territorial cohesion, it is possible that understandings of policymakers and practitioners may differ or even conflict with each other. However, some think that it is the strength of the concept (see for example Böhme & Gløersen, 2011). Thus, it becomes interesting to study what meaning stakeholders give to territorial cohesion through the renewal process of the TAEU.

2.1.2. Territorial agenda of the EU

The Territorial agenda of the EU, the predecessor of the European Spatial Planning perspective (ESDP), is a central policy document of territorial cohesion. It introduces objectives and principles of territorial cohesion and gives guidelines for implementation of the agenda. The EC has established two other documents, the Green paper on territorial cohesion in 2008 and the Annual territorial cohesion reports since the 2008. The Green paper discusses in general about territorial cohesion and the annual territorial cohesion reports are used to collect geographical information for evidence-based policymaking. The TAEU was recently under revision for policy update by the NTCCP group and the new agenda was adopted by the ministers of territorial development of each member state 1st of December 2020.

The TAEU is made in this spirit, to improve policy making in the EU, for better coordination of sectoral and national policies and to minimize contradictory effects and strengthen synergies (European Commission, 2008). However, the TAEU is not a policy or either a typical political agenda, since it has been developed further compared to the definitions of Baumgartner (2015, 363) and Lelieveldt & Prince, (2015, 209). It points out the territorial challenges and the territorial priorities for the territorial development of the EU. Moreover, it consists section which presents implementation mechanism and guidelines for future actions. For example, in the new agenda there is a collection of pilot actions to operationalize the agenda (see Spatial Foresight on behalf of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion, 2020a). However, there is no funding allocated directly for implementing the TAEU. Therefore, actors wishing to implement it must look for funding by themselves if necessary. Other option is to use soft tools for implementing the agenda.

The Predecessor of the TAEU, the ESDP was formulated in the 1990s, in the context where the narrative of fear of the EU losing its power in global competition was very strong. The ESDP is a geopolitical tool for European spatial planning, which is dominated by economic interests (see e.g. Moio, 2011; Ficher & Sykes, 2009). Aim was to denationalize capitalist territorial organization and to construct supranational scalar configurations in order to form a European knowledge-based economy and society. The ESDP was modified into evidence-based documents, which are the Territorial agenda of the EU published in 2007 and Green Paper on territorial cohesion published in 2008. (Moio, 2011.) Both the TAEU and the predecessor ESDP relay on the idea of improving European competitiveness and economic growth. Compared to the ESDP, the TAEU is more sensible for sustainable development and solidarity. The document was also cut to 20 pages from the 80 pages of the original ESDP. The first TAEU included many storylines, vision and values without precision, and it left a lot room for interpretation, as well the later versions in some respects. However, it was criticized for not including any maps or graphs even it is ought to be a strategical document for spatial planning. (Ficher & Sykes, 2009.) Still, Faludi (2009, 15) argues that it is the ‘closest thing’ to European spatial planning, even it does not include any traditional elements of spatial planning.

Thus, the TAEU is associated to European spatial planning, social and geopolitical imaginaries such as European economy, society and territories. It deals also with politics of scales, where the EU territory is rescaled and reproduced by actors who implement it. Moreover, it is a politico-economic-cultural process that brings scales, places, territories and networks together in

unique combinations and assemblages. These scales are produced through the EU sponsored networks in spatial planning and through policy documents such as the TAEU through rhetoric and practices. Even the EC is an active member in the networks of spatial planning and involved in the production of the 'EU-level' policy, it is through a process of Europeanisation, whereby all participants give meaning for the European spatial planning by producing these spaces of and for Europeanisation. (Moisio, 2011, 21.)

2.1.3. Renewal of the Territorial agenda of the EU

The council of the EU is in charge of revising the EU policies, which happens in cooperation with the European Commission, member states' ministries and relevant stakeholders. In case of territorial cohesion, which is 'low' politics of the EU, revision work is delegated for officials working at member states' ministries (Faludi, 2009). They draft the document together with help of experts and consultants. Content of the agendas has remained quite similar but there are some changes in orientation and priorities of the agendas made during the revision processes every ten years so far. For example, in the first Territorial Agenda published in 2007: *Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions*, emphasis was on competitiveness and sustainability. In the updated TA published in 2011, called the Territorial Agenda 2020: *Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions*, emphasis was on smart specialization and social inclusion. And the newest TAEU is titled as the Territorial Agenda 2030, *future for all places and people*, emphasis is on equal opportunities and balanced development. All of these agendas include imaginaries and a vision for European territory and society that are asked to put in practice by all capable actors in Europe (European Commission, 2020b).

The preparatory work of new Territorial Agenda is done by the NTCCP members, which is composed by the experts of the territorial cohesion from member states (public officers from ministries of member states who are in charge of territorial development policies), the EC's officers from the DG Regio, interest groups and trusteeship. Member states holding the presidency of the council of the EU have central role in taking forward the renewal process and organizing the meetings of these networks where the agenda is drafted. Finally, the ministers responsible for territorial cohesion approved the revised agenda at the meeting of Directors-General for Territorial Cohesion (DG TC).

2.2. Social imaginary in the context of EU's territorial cohesion policy

As the citations of Böhme & Lürer (2016, 19) in the introduction illustrated, actions without vision are useless and a shared common vision is essential for effective policymaking. Thus, a social imaginary becomes an essential element for the EU's territorial development. A social imaginary is conceptualized as a way how a large group of people, even a whole society, share same understanding, the social imaginary of their social existence and surroundings. Social imaginary makes it possible to have common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy. All in all, it is about making sense of the practice of society and those norms and expectations that people forming a society have on each other. First a few people, elites, share the same social imaginary and possibly after it is shared by a larger group of people. (Taylor, 2004, 23-25.) Thus, the social imaginary forms a background of thinking and action patterns shared within a collective such as an epistemic community or a society. Institutionalisation of the social imaginary frames social practices which is a very condition of functioning society. Common norms, rules and shared understandings are basis for social life and living together. (Debarbieux, 2019,3-4.)

Social imaginary does not necessarily define individual imaginations, but a shared imaginary stabilizes individual's imagining activity and orients it. Furthermore, individual imaginations contribute to the formation and transformation of the social imaginary. (Debarbieux, 2019,4). These interactions between individuals happen in social spaces and networks. At the same time, space is a constitutive dimension of social imaginary and affect our understanding of the world as social and spatial construction (Debarbieux, 2019, 1). Thus, the NTCCP network engages in formation and promotion of a particular European social and territorial imaginary. It can be seen as the elite group who defines the imaginary and strives for wider acceptance of it.

Furthermore, space is a central constitutive of social imaginaries such as national identities. Social imaginaries direct our actions and practices in a society where common understanding is shared. When social imaginary is attached to practices and representations of space and space becomes object of social imaginary. Circulation of social imaginary, practices and experiences contribute to institutionalisation of social imaginary and its spatiality. Moreover, social imaginaries mobilize geographical knowledge and space functions also as representation of social imaginary (Debarbieux, 2019, 27), like in the case of the TAEU, which is promoted by the EU networks of spatial planning and regional development. In critical geopolitics, such imaginaries are approached as geopolitical imaginaries, which I further develop in the section 3.3.1.

All in all, it is about these power relations between actors who promote certain social imaginaries and try to gain acceptance for them and them to be shared with wider public through their networks. Thus, it becomes question of forming society between individuals living in close interactions and institutionalisation of their living space by these imaginaries and related practices. The formation of imaginary of the EU is a dynamic process, where common practices and values attached to Europeanness and Europe are circulated. It is about how people see themselves and what is common to these people. Moreover, “the EU is always in the making never finished” (Debarbieux, 2019, 26), therefore this process is constantly in the making (see also Bialasiewicz, 2011). Thus, the social imaginary is the background idea orienting the process of forming European society and producing European territory. Political documents, maps and graphs that include spatial configurations, function as imaginary containers, which link member state territories to the EU territory. Thus, the TAEU may be considered as a document embodying social and geopolitical imaginaries and the renewal process as social interaction where imaginaries are defined, re-defined, circulated and gaining acceptance. It is about gaining acceptance of a particular vision and meaning system, a common European way of seeing the world, society and space.

There are several social imaginaries existing and in constructions (Debarbieux, 2019, 129). Therefore, these social imaginaries compete to each other, for example, the European imaginary competes nation-state-territory imaginaries. The EU mobilizes regional and local scale spatial and social imaginaries to free its territoriality from nation-state thinking. This regionalisation process is EU’s way to shape Europe for its use and hence institutionalize the social imaginary and territory of the EU. The networks of spatial planning and regional development have role in this process of promoting social imaginary of the EU and this particular spatial framework of thinking. Thus, it is about these tactics and strategies for instituting the EU’s social and spatial imaginary through the territorial works of the EU.

2.2.1. The sustainable and cohesive Europe imaginary

Planning can be seen as multi-dimensional activity where planners and policymakers aim to influence on future of society by policies, which are turned into actions and programmes when put in practise (Campbell & Fainstein, 2012, 293). The TAEU is much more than a guideline for land-use or technical details about infrastructure, it is about an imaginary and visions of European territoriality and society. It can be seen as (utopistic) vision, an imaginary that aims for ideal and cohesive society and territory of the EU. The Territorial Agenda of the EU aims for “*a sustainable future for all places*

and people in Europe”, which clearly says that the agenda emphasizes sustainable development and social cohesion rather than the strategical spatial and economic planning (European Commission, 2020b).

Thus, understanding the space as a social construction has a key role in regional development policies that aim for territorial cohesion. Space is produced by social practices and interactions between different actors. Policies are made in order to influence and prevent future development, even in reality policymakers have limited capacity to control the world or people. The challenge of making effective territorial cohesion policy is that the policy is made in the EU-level, and the implementation can be anything due to the open method of coordination. On the other hand, this is one of the strengths of the OMC, there are many possible ways and freedom to implement policies. Acceptance of the agenda and embodied visions for the European society and territoriality by stakeholders are necessary for making the vision come true. However, elusiveness of the central concepts might make this more complicated.

Moreover, the Territorial Agenda of the EU’s fragility is that there is no clear link between theory and putting in practice due to the OMC, in other words, between policy formulation and implementation. Therefore, there might be a rupture between what is ought to be done and what is actually done in order to achieve the goal of cohesive Europe. At the end, it depends on actors and agency what kind of spatiality of the EU is produced and how.

2.3. Stakeholders

I use the term stakeholders in this study, which refers in general to all of those participating in this study and potentially engaged in implementing the agenda. The NTCCP group can be theorized as an ‘epistemic community’ (Waterhout, 2011, 98), which I briefly explain in the next chapter. To include other actors in the study, it is useful to acknowledge that the TAEU works by networked model of governance, which is explained in the following chapter. To include actors outside of the epistemic community, other stakeholders engaged in the networks and governance of territorial development politics are targeted. The stakeholders are selected in the study by targeted random sampling method, which I will explain later in the methodology chapter.

2.3.1. The NTCCP as an epistemic community

The NTCCP network is composed individuals from various positions in their member states and organizations hence, it can be theorized as an ‘epistemic community’ (Waterhout, 2011, 98). The NTCCP is composed by experts of regional development policies and spatial planning from member states, officers of the DG Regio, interest groups and trusteeship such as CEMR, COR, European economic and social committee (EESC), European Spatial planning observation network (ESPON), European grouping on Territorial Cohesion (EGTC), as well as consultants and researchers.

Members of the epistemic community work in close interaction, share common professional vocabulary and the community contains complex power relations. However, it is ‘loose’ composition because engagement of different members varies a lot and composition of the group is very heterogenous (Waterhout, 2011). In addition, all potential stakeholders do not have direct access to these networks and arenas of spatial planning and regional development of the EU. What it is essential is that these people belonging in the epistemic community share reasonably similar professional and educational language and understandings, which permits them to discuss about the topic, without a common language this would be really hard or even impossible.

2.3.2 Governance and networks

Governance refers to a model of governance marked by collaborative and networked forms of policymaking (Lelieveldt & Prince, 2015, 39). Territorial cohesion policy can be understood as this type of governance, characterized by involvement of subnational levels of government in policymaking. However, the main stakeholders involved in the TAEU renewal process are members of the epistemic community of the NTCCP. Therefore, the targeted group of stakeholders is composed by the NTCCP members.

To widen the stakeholder representation, the survey of this thesis was sent for the NTCCP members with an invitation to disseminate it further for other relevant stakeholders. That way the study serves its objective of giving the voice for different stakeholders EU-wide at different levels of governance. Also, it makes it possible to compare meanings and visions related to territorial cohesion and the TAEU outside of the elite circle of the epistemic community. Due to the ‘random’ sampling technique, the ‘stakeholders’ is better and looser concept to refer than the actual epistemic community. Thus, the participants of the study are referred as stakeholders.

2.4. Open method of coordination

Open method of coordination (OMC) is one of the EU's implementation mechanisms for non-binding policies. The OMC is about mutual learning process and voluntary actions to achieve common objectives (Lelieveldt & Prince, 2015, 40). It is based on institutionalized learning process between member states. Common goals are set, and member states choose themselves the means and in what extent they implement such policies. (Lelieveldt & Prince, 2015, 100-101.) The TAEU is implemented by open method of coordination which explains its limited outcomes compared to binding policies. The OMC is used to convergence policies between member states by coordination and learning from each other. It is about benchmarking and policy harmonisation and up to member states in what extent they implement the policy and there are not sanctions if policy is not implemented. (Lelieveldt & Prince, 2015, 100-101.)

The OMC is driven into some extent by the Council of the EU where member states are represented. Also, the EC is in charge of monitoring performances of member states and produces reports that are discussed at the meetings of the council of the EU (Lelieveldt & Prince, 2015, 100). The revision of the territorial agenda of the EU is taken forward by several presidencies: Romanian, Finnish, Croatian and German. The TAEU editorial group is rather dominated by the EU lead top-down 'elite' approach (Waterhout, 2011, 88), where the coming EU presidencies, DG Regio, CEMR and COR draft the agenda with assistance of the consultant company. Thus, the involvement of actors in renewal process and defining the agenda varies a lot amongst member states and stakeholders.

From the perspective of political geography, the Territorial Agenda of the EU can be seen as a political instrument, by which the European Commission together with the member states aims to influence in spatial development of the EU. In order to succeed in implementation an agency is needed. Central question is, if whether the EC succeeds in creating network of influence and framework for political action that actually have influence on European spaces. This can happen in multiple scales depending on engagement of different level stakeholders. Thus, the governance is multi-level and not lead from top or down, rather is comes from multiple directions. However, the core embodies certain EU-lead perspectives and networks include complex power relations that are not simple to catch.

The TAEU is invited to put in practice "European, transnational, macro-regional and cross-border levels" and "at national, regional and local levels, and in cooperation with other countries" and by "all players involved in spatial planning and territorial development policies at all

administrative and governance levels in the EU and neighbouring countries” (Spatial Foresight on behalf of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion, 2020a, 22–25). This can create networks and spaces of European territorialities, which evolve in time. In political geography, space is understood as a framework thus, the TAEU implementation can create framework for Europeanisation (see e.g. Rosière, 2007). Spatial planning and territorial cohesion policy of the EU can be seen as a geopolitical tool, where the spaces are made to work in European way by encouraging different level actors to implement the TAEU (Bialasiewicz, 2011, 5-6).

The OMC consists many interrelations and networks that make the governance creative and open-ended process, which may take many forms. Also, the fact that the agenda is loose and leaves room for subjective interpretations and understandings explains the various visions and eventually diverse outcomes of the TAEU practices. Furthermore, this openness of the framework may risk effectiveness, impact and utility of the policy. In practice OMC consist, reviews, learning and sharing good practices, numerical goals and evidence-based reporting. (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015, 831.) Benchmarking as element creates some pressure which might encourage to implement the agenda even if it is not mandatory.

3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical background of the study brings together several approaches. I start from social constructionism, which is followed by spatial planning and geographical understandings of space. I also discuss critical geopolitics, after which I introduce the concept of Europeanisation. Together these approaches form a comprehensive understanding of the EU's territorial cohesion policy and the TAEU.

3.1. Social constructionism

The research starts from social constructionism, in which researcher aims to make sense of individuals subjective understandings of the world. Individuals' experiences, interactions with other people and social and cultural norms in people's lives construct their understanding of the world (Creswell, 2009, 8). The world exists as reality in people's daily life. People construct the reality by their experiences, thinking and practicing in and of the world. Hence, the reality is produced by people's understanding and interpretations of the world around them. (Häkli, 1999, 133.) Consequently, the world is seen as socially constructed, where people's background, experiences and subjective position matter as well the interactions with other people. Researchers aim to interpret these multiple meanings and understandings that individuals have and try to identify common patterns or theory if possible. (Creswell, 2009, 8.)

Language has a central role in communicating and construction of people's worldview. Therefore, social constructionists focus on studying language and meanings that words and concepts have. Language becomes instrument to express and give meanings to abstract and material things around us. (Häkli, 1999.) As mentioned before, the NTCCP epistemic community shares a common professional language and communicates in English, which makes it possible for them to understand each other. Furthermore, the world exists as system before people interpret it, things have names and meanings, which is why language has a central role in interactions amongst people who socially construct the reality together (Häkli, 1999, 134-135). Hence, it becomes possible to interpret, communicate and structure the reality with others by having a common language and the reality can be studied by investigating language and meanings that people use for describing it (Häkli, 1999, 137).

The constructionist perspective fits well on theorisation of social and geopolitical imaginaries related to the territorial cohesion and to the social construction of the territory of the EU because language is used for producing the TAEU. Moreover, the study investigates stakeholders'

worldviews and meanings that they associate to territorial cohesion and to the TAEU by analysing their responses and language in the survey. Also, context is an important component for investigating meanings and the reality that is transmitted by words and concepts. Moreover, language and concepts are not neutral they are born in certain context, for certain purposes and embody certain view of the world of those in power of making them. (Häkli,1999, 139.) The current renewal context is especially fruitful for studying meanings and imaginaries, since it involves of re-working, re-defining and re-production of visions for the territory of the EU and to some extent the Europeanness embodied in the TAEU.

The research focuses on meanings, imaginaries and vision about the spatial nature of the EU and the social imaginary of cohesive Europe. There are three dimensions that should be taken in consideration when studying geographical space: meanings (language, concepts and categories), social relations and physical world, which are components of the constructed reality (Häkli,1999,140-141). This can be studied by analysing language and meanings that stakeholders associate to territorial cohesion and the TAEU. The renewal context of the TAEU can be seen as social process and network where people, different stakeholders, engage in production of these concepts and meanings which embody their understanding of the European territoriality and all what is associated to the territorial cohesion. By analysing stakeholders' responses in questions such as who, what, why and how territorial cohesion and the TAEU as framework works and what meanings it embodies, we can gain understanding about Europeanness and the EU as a social construction and territorial reality.

3.1.1. Connecting social constructionism to theories and concepts of geography

My theoretical framework is composed of three intertwined perspectives and associated scholarly debates: spatial planning, critical geopolitics and Europeanisation. Some researchers have approached the topic from perspective of spatial planning and institutionalisation (see. e.g. Faludi, 2006; Waterhout, 2011), politics of scale (see e.g. Moisio, 2011), and evaluation studies about effectiveness and impact of cohesion policy (see. e.g. Bachtler et al. 2017a; Bachtler, Begg, Charles, & Polverari, 2017b). Central obstacle for approaching the topic is related to the EU's nature, it does not have a fixed territory and it has only limited competence in matters of spatial planning, thus the topic cannot be approached only by spatial planning. Literature on critical geopolitics and Europeanisation help to gain a better theoretical understanding of the territorial cohesion policy of the EU and the TAEU.

I start this section by introducing spatial planning and some debates about the spatial nature of the EU. After that, I move to critical geopolitics which connects the TAEU to wider debate of European politics and role of territorial knowledge in policymaking. I close the section to the concept of Europeanisation which is a central theory for understanding how ‘soft policies’ of the EU work.

3.2. Spatial planning and European territoriality

Previous studies (Faludi, 2009; Luukkonen, 2015) have approached European regional development from perspectives of spatial planning and Europeanisation. Spatial planning is a shared competence between member states and the union (Faludi, 2009). Traditionally, spatial planning is exercised over fixed territories, such as state territories. Since, the EU has not supranational authority over member states territories it has limited capacity to exercise spatial planning over these territories. To overcome this issue, spatial planning is seen rather as a geopolitical tool under the headline of regional development instead of seeing it as a separate policy field that union would regulate (see eg. Moisio, 2011; Luukkonen, 2015).

Spatial planners, regional developers and policymakers from various levels of governance gather and form networks of the territorial cohesion policy. In these circles, competing imaginaries, understandings and interests of European territorial development are discussed and circulated (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015). Even if spatial planning is not the EU’s ‘official’ policy sector, in these networks of actors (who have competence in spatial planning and regional development in their home countries) the EU gains power on matters of spatial planning and regional development by mechanism of Europeanisation. Thus, it becomes possible to argue the EU as a territorial polity. (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015, 829.)

The spatiality of the EU is a constant political and social process where different actors define, give meaning and shape the European space, it is constantly in the making (Paasi, 2001, 13). Every stakeholder sees the spatiality of the EU in their own way and through their own experiences. In addition, it depends on these subjects if they decide to engage in the making of the space of the EU. Thus, there are several spaces of Europeanisation that evolve, rise and fall separately and simultaneously. In sum, the territoriality of the EU is the object produced by multiple actors in networked and relational spaces (Luukkonen & Moisio, 2016, 1452-1453).

The problem of spatial planning and territoriality of the EU is linked to the wider question; how geographers define the territory. In anglophone tradition, the concept of territory is seen as a bounded space by national borders, associated to the idea of state and a fixed territory (see e.g. Antonsich, 2009, 790; Del Biaggio, 2015). Approaching territory of the EU from this perspective leads to the ‘territorial trap’ because the EU is only a political union without a sovereign territory. Therefore, the francophone understanding of territory as an appropriated space by people and socially constructed proportion of space is more practical. Thereby, a territory is seen as a flexible portion of space, produced by networks, circuits, flows and social interactions. (Del Biaggio, 2015,43.) Moreover, these networks include multiple scales that create complex overlapping and fuzzy territories, which is why they should be considered together instead of seeing Europe as one scale (see e.g. Paasi, 2003, 112; Elissalde, 2002, 197). This links the TAEU to practices of controlling and shaping European space and people and production of the territory of the EU.

3.2.1. Territorial spaces

The EU is a political union, and it does not have a fixed territory, it is rather a sum of members state’s territories (Faludi, 2018a, 94). Spatial planning has not been brought up to the European competence and member states maintain control over their sovereign territories. As a result, there are conflicting imaginaries of state-territory and overlapping European territory, if it is seen simply as sum of the first. Therefore, the EU’s territoriality does not fit to theorisation as a territorial space. As a consequence, this is issue for spatial planning which has been seen as practice and control over fixed territories and population within state territories.

Since, the EU has neither sovereign power over its territory nor complete competence in the field of spatial planning, the ‘control’ over space has to come from other policy fields and competences, such as from the networks of cohesion policy. Those networks bring together actors with competence, which makes it possible to gain indirect power by forming agencies that implement the territorial cohesion policy. However, the competence in spatial planning is not delegated to the EU through these networks, it remains dispersed in many levels and scales. The EU promotes balanced development, equal chances for people and places by the Lisbon treaty. In order to do so, the spatial planning is put under the flag of cohesion policy, which could be characterized more as economic and social policy or development policy rather than a policy field of spatial planning. (Faludi, 2009 & 2018a, 96.)

The EU uses politics of scale to overcome the issue of territorial sovereignty of member states. The territorial cohesion policy refers to the European competitiveness, where the idea is to upscale issues of competition into the European scale, where the EU's territoriality is seen as a supranational entity. (Moisio, 2011, 20.) Furthermore, it aims for equity and balanced development between regions which refers to sub-national scales. Thus, visions of the territoriality of the EU include many different scales and spatial imaginaries that are used in the territorial cohesion policy. These networks gather stakeholders from different scales, who potentially take the agenda seriously and put it in practice in their competences in various levels and scales. Thus, the individuals involved in these networks with competence in matters of spatial planning and regional development produce the territoriality of the EU.

3.2.2. Relational spaces

The TAEU comprises rhetoric that refers to relational spaces such as cross-borders, functional regions, trans- and intraregional regions. For example, transnational and cross-border regions are considered as key spaces in reducing inequalities and increasing competitiveness (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2017, 230). Therefore, it fits to the narrative of relational spaces better than to the territorial one. Moreover, European spatiality is linked to political and economic processes of scaling and regionalisation (Paasi, 2001, 13). It means that the space of the EU is constantly produced, reproduced and consumed by people who interpret and give meaning spatial representations of Europe such as maps, graphs and political documents. The ESPON publications, INTERREG programmes and other productions at NUTS scales are examples of such practices (see eg. Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015). However, the discourse of European regions should not be taken for granted because it is a construction of political elites such as policymakers, experts and researchers (Paasi, 2001, 13). Thus, by studying the TAEU it can be tested how powerful these representations are on editing understandings of spatial representation of the EU.

Developmental policies refer to regions as subjects or objects of development even it is the actors, people and social processes that operate and occur in the regions. Hence, these practices produce European spaces, which would not occur without actors and agencies. (Paasi, 2001, 16.) Regions are constructions like any other social spaces, which means that they may emerge and disappear. The relational understanding of spaces is linked to the networked understanding of spaces due to the relations that exist between regions and relational spaces. Therefore, relational and networked understandings of space are used in this thesis.

3.2.3. Neo-medieval empire and networked spaces

As an alternative way to see the European space, Faludi's (2018b) proposes seeing the EU territory as a neo-medieval empire (see also Zielonka, 2012). This theorisation is based on separation of powers and varying degree of integration. The EU has not fixed boundaries, it is decentralized, de-territorialized and characterized by hybrid identities and networks. It is about flows, connections and nodes between places and people. (Faludi, 2018b.) Therefore, in some respects the territoriality of the EU fits better to the theorisation of it as the neo-medieval empire than as territorial space. In contrast to relational spaces, the networked conceptualisation helps to understand totality of European spatiality, because it shows linkages between relational spaces and actors. Moreover, it captures better the changing nature of the European spatiality by seeing it as evolving process instead of combination of stable territorial unites.

Cohesion policy involves many actors in multi-level governance and there are overlapping scales, which fit better to the theorising of the EU as the neo-medieval empire characterized by fuzzy borders and networks (Zielonka, 2012). Moreover, government is replaced by governance, which is composed by complex interrelations amongst sectors and scales. However, this empire theory does not require abandoning of the nation-state-thinking but taking in consideration of other polities that appear. Other polities are formed for example by urban and regional authorities that are part of networks of territorial cohesion. Such networks may consist also public-private partnerships and participation of civil society in governance. Thus, implementation of the TAEU can result various outcomes depending on the actors' understandings of territorial cohesion and practices. (Faludi, 2018b.)

Within the Territorial Agenda framework, it is common that national authorities are represented at the meetings by officials working at the ministries in charge of spatial planning and territorial development policies. However, it is known that in the EU's territorial politics authority is dispersed between levels such as subnational unities (cities, regions and provinces) and supranational actors like trusteeship or the EU itself. Therefore, implementation and authority are in hands of different actors coming from various levels and scales. In the NTCCP group there are non-governmental actors such as CEMR and COR representing sub-national interests. The national governments might dominate the EU policymaking, but implementation depends a lot on sub-national authorities' capacity and resources of implementing the policy. (Lelieveldt & Prince, 2015, 39.) Furthermore, interactions between national and regional level and transmitting information about the

policy are crucial. It is not about policymaking in the EU-level, instead interactions between different levels matter the most and the so-called 'good governance'. Cooperation and coordination between these levels affects outcomes and results of policies.

Therefore, the EU's territorial dimension is very complex, floating and changing reality where policymaking requires coordination between actors. The EU itself publishes documents and refers to the European regions, whereby the aim is to diminish the state territories and represent the EU territories by smaller united regions, which together form the EU territory by using territories of member states. By engaging different level stakeholders in policymaking and implementation the EU creates new circles and spaces for Europeanisation, thus produces the EU territory. Partnerships and networks are spaces where stakeholders share good practices and learn from each other. Thus, the TAEU is framework for this kind of learning processes in networks where the EC is involved as leading actor for cooperation and coordination.

3.3. Critical geopolitics

Critical geopolitics studies relationship between geographical knowledge and political power (Moisio & Harle, 2010, 454). Concepts of human geography, political geography and geopolitics are used in the critical geopolitics. However, Agnew, (2003, 28) argues that critical geopolitics should not be defined too strictly, it is an open-ended work which gives freedom for creativity of researcher. Moreover, geopolitics focuses on studying how geographical knowledge is used for political purposes to advance certain interests. Geographical knowledge can be used in many ways to produce political documents such as agendas, policies and maps. They represent social constructions of political space and they embody norms and values of the social order. In the Finnish tradition of critical geopolitics, spaces are seen as social and political processes that evolve instead of being stable units. Thus, spaces or regions can be seen as subjects involved in the making of politics and producing spaces instead of just being the objectives of policymaking. (Moisio & Harle, 2010, 454-455.) This means that the relationship is complex and works in both ways, thus spatial structures affect political processes and political processes affect spatial structures.

3.3.1. Geopolitical imaginaries

Visions for the EU can be approached as social imaginaries as well as geopolitical imaginaries, the latter emphasizes usage of geographical knowledge in the making of imaginary. Moreover,

geopolitical imaginaries are rather territorial vision as the TAEU instead of focusing only forming a society. Furthermore, geopolitical imaginations, assumptions and designations affect and enter into the making of world politics by orienting subjective imagination and understandings of the world (Agnew, 2003, 2; Kuus 2017,1). As the history of classical geopolitics shows, geopolitical imaginaries are powerful tools to be associated into the world politics (see e.g. Dodds, Kuus & Sharp, 2013). Critical geopolitics criticizes classical geopolitics, which is considered to be a too simplistic approach marked by social Darwinism, environmental determinism and imperial rivalry and great power projection (Dodds et al., 2013, 3). Moreover, the essence of critical geopolitics is in studying active processes and practices through which political actors are spatialized and producing spaces (Dodds et al., 2013). In my research, spatiality of the EU's power is investigated through the renewal process of the TAEU. This consists researching social and geopolitical imaginaries associated to the TAEU and eventually to the European spaces through the concept of territorial cohesion and implementation of the TAEU.

Political actors produce spaces by means of representational and material geopolitical practices. Space and political power are connected in this active production of political space by institutionally bounded intellectuals such as the networks of territorial cohesion. Thus, socially constructed spatiality of world politics becomes visible in political documents, maps and strategies such in the TAEU. Critical geopolitics studies how these powerful political actors produce geopolitical narratives and circulate them among different audiences. These audiences are both consumers and as well producers of geopolitical discourses. Furthermore, critical geopolitics emphasizes the constitutive role of language and conceptualizes geopolitics as culturally embedded in spatial practices. Moreover, it is about investigation how geopolitical imaginaries are produced, circulated, and how they influence in the ways in which world is understood and politics made. (Moisio, 2015, 223-226.)

The TAEU can be seen as a very specific example of using geographical knowledge to produce the territoriality of the EU. The TAEU embodies geopolitical and social imaginaries and visions for Europe such as mentioned in the title: “*A sustainable future for all places and people in Europe*” (Spatial Foresight on behalf of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion, 2020a). These visions of spatiality of the EU are produced by various actors such as academics, political leaders and regional developers, spatial planners and interest groups. These actors involved in spatial planning and have close connections and they form

networks where ideas are discussed and debated. In reality, it depends on practitioners how they interpret these ideas and put them in practice.

The TAEU includes many elements associated to production of the EU's territoriality such as networks, relational spaces, reterritorialization of economy by regionalisation, comparisons and benchmarking. As mentioned in the introduction, the EU is engaged in promoting the geopolitical idea of establishing Europe as a knowledge-based society. By the networked model of governance, the EU becomes a geopolitical persona that engages various agencies in putting in practice this imaginary. (see e.g. Moisio, 2011, 20-21; Luukkonen & Moisio, 2016, 456; Moisio, 2018, 146.)

3.3.2. Geopolitical subjects and objects

Geopolitical subjects and objects are studied in critical geopolitics. These subjects are no longer only state-centric actors but other practitioners such as non-governmental organisations, informal actors, agencies and networks. Thus, critical geopolitics studies practitioners of geopolitics and how they produce particular spatial relations. (Dodds et al. 2013, 7; Agnew, 2013.) Critical geopolitics fits better to the contemporary world, where state is not anymore only actor and other actors rise. Also, state has transformed its power into indirect configurations and uses its power through agencies and indirect ways of influencing. Since the EU's territorial nature does not fit to the nation-state-territory narrative, this wider view of geopolitical powers and spatial dimensions are useful. This is the reason why I do not consider spatial planning is enough to capture the complexity of European spatial dimensions and other perspectives like critical geopolitics and Europeanisation are needed.

Moreover, the spatial unites like regions should not been approached as passive objects of policymaking, rather they should be considered as active participants in policymaking and functioning as agencies participating in the production of geopolitical imaginaries and putting in practice geopolitical agendas. This makes the TAEU process particularly interesting, the agenda does not only come from political leaders and experts, but it is produced in community or networked relationship which engages various stakeholders. Moreover, it will be particularly interesting to see what meanings they give to terms such as the 'European territories', territorial cohesion and to the TAEU in general. Due to the OMC, it really depends on the stakeholders, who are potential agencies, what kind of spaces are created and what kind of European imaginary is accepted and promoted. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that level of governance is not the same as geographical scale or space because power is not bounded into the space and territoriality, even though the power

may manifest spatially (Dodds et al., 2013, 8). Hence, the spatial and political relationships are complex.

Bialasiewicz (2011) describes the EU as a constant process, a project that creates European spaces. The EU is both a geopolitical subject and object, it is a two-way process. Places, regions and countries are brought to the 'EU'ropean and made work for the Europe. The EU does this by its soft power, by formal policies and popular geographies, which are put in practices by local and regional 'elites'. It is about incorporating spaces into the 'EU'ropean by gaining actorness in different levels of governance. This process is never accomplished, and it is constantly in the making like the integration itself. (Bialasiewicz, 2011.) Therefore, it is useful to associate this process in the figure of the EU. Moreover, spatial planning has been seen as a geopolitical tool, marked by economic and political interests behind it. Thus, it is about political struggle for defining the Europe and Europeanness.

Naming the subjects and objects of territorial cohesion is a political process. Seeing the EU as the neo-medieval empire helps to understand better how the European space is produced by geopolitical subjects such as stakeholders implementing the agenda. Together they form networks and depending on the object of action, new spaces might be produced. Moisio & Luukkonen (2015) theorize this as a governmentalization of space, where the European space becomes a governable unit through geopolitical practices. It is about these complex interorganisational relations and practices which create the EU territoriality (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015).

Furthermore, territorial cohesion policies treat the EU territory as a geopolitical object, like one unit which is produced by measures, maps, analysis and acted upon. (Luukkonen & Moisio 2016; Jones et al., 2019, 101). At the same time space is not the only possible object, instead economy and people can be the objectives of these practices. Overall, it is about making the European territory a governable unit by establishing networks (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015). At the same time this contributes to the social imaginary of Europeanness and geopolitical imaginary of European territoriality.

3.3.3 Spaces of representation

The TAEU can be considered as a geopolitical representation. Even it does not include maps or graphs for spatial configurations, it embodies an imaginary or ideas of European territoriality, society and

economy. As Moisisio & Harle (2010, 454) argue “In critical geopolitics, political documents are understood to be connected with the social construction of political space and with the norms and values of the social order.” Thus, it embodies political, social and spatial imaginaries that are associated into the EU. At the end, it depends on practitioners of the geopolitical agenda how these imaginaries are understood and brought alive by their practices which produce spaces of representation of the agenda. Thus, the territoriality is produced by practices of actors.

3.4. Europeanisation

European spatial planning can be studied as a process of Europeanisation. It is a process of interplay across scales that produces spaces of and for Europeanisation. Political visions, values and attitudes of what Europe is are brought together when actors from different scales meet in arenas of territorial cohesion. Moreover, it is a socio-political process whereby actors give meaning to Europeanness and “European ways of doing things”. Arenas of the European territorial cohesion is dominated by the ‘elites’ who have central role on defining these European ways of doing and thinking. It is a socializing and learning process where actors become closer to each other and start to understand each other. (Clark & Jones, 2008.) However, these elite visions for Europe can be challenged by alternative visions and subjective imagination, which may result conflicting views and tensions amongst actors involved in process of Europeanisation.

Europeanisation have been studied in several ways by geographers. First, it can be studied as transformation of domestic politics under pressure of the European integration (see e.g. Luukkonen, 2015). Second, it can be studied from a spatial perspective as ‘territory works of the EU’ practiced in many scales and spaces (see eg. Moisisio & Luukkonen, 2017, 225). These scales are reproduced and constantly worked by powerful actors who promote their vision of Europe on expense of those less powerful (Clark & Jones, 2008, 309). Furthermore, the territorial cohesion policy embodies geopolitical narratives, which aim to influence understandings of the Europe’s spatial and scalar organization. Thus, it can be seen as politics of scale (see e.g. Moisisio, 2011, 19). Lastly, it can be studied as a process of socialization and learning by focusing on networks and actors who produce these spaces (Clark & Jones, 2008, 309). In sum, processes of Europeanisation are linked to the wider debates about nature and the making of European integration (Clark & Jones, 2008, 310). This may include discussion of what Europe is and what it represents in terms of identities, territoriality, government and power (Clark & Jones, 2008).

3.4.1 Institutional transformations

Europeanisation of spatial planning is characterized by increased power of the EU in shaping of guidelines, concepts and strategic orientation of public policies (Marques et al., 2018, 547). It is a two-way process where the EU aims to influence national public policies but also issues from national context are brought up to the European (Marques et al., 2018, 549). The EC is a central actor in process, by guiding domestic spatial development policies through the allocation of structural funds and publishing of regulations and reports (Luukkonen, 2015).

According to previous studies (see Baltina & Muravska, 2017; Szabo, 2017), the territorial cohesion policy outcomes have been mainly policy transfers from the European level to national policies and institutional adaptations to better manage allocation of the EU funds and implementation. Outcomes of the territorial cohesion policies have been rather indirect and qualitative. Therefore, the Europeanisation is useful approach to see policy outcomes instead of focusing net outcomes measured by quantitative indicators.

3.4.2. The territory work of the EU

The TAEU, contains visions about European spatiality and practices. It is linked to the idea of promoting idea of the Europe as a coherent spatial entity and removing different understandings of Europe by means of governmental technology (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015). Thus, the EU is seen as a territorial object that many subjects, involved in formal or informal networks, aim to edit by governing practices (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2017, 228-229). Thus, Europeanisation can be understood as maintaining, constructing and expanding the EU's power within the EU, outside of its territory and into informal policy areas where it has not competence (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2017, 229). The supranational EU imaginary is materialized by projects and programmes of spatial planning and regional development such as the TAEU, ESPON and Interreg (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2017, 231-233). Previous studies (see e.g. Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015 & 2017) have focused on studying Europeanisation in the context of ESPON and Interreg programmes. However, the EU's spatiality is produced by other policy sectors and practices too, it means that territoriality is not strictly affected by territorial policies but in theory by all policies of the EU.

Stakeholders involved in the European spatial planning become actors of the EU when they are operating in networks and implementing the EU agendas (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2017, 231)

This can be conscious or even unconscious when based on informal and indirect cooperation in networks. As a consequence, these practices produce European spaces and engage actors in the EU's territory work at various scales. Without these practices the EU territory would not exist as a policy object. (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2017, 231.) It is through these networks and practices that the EU territory becomes manifested as political and spatial unit (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2015, 1458-1459).

3.4.3. Learning processes and networks

Europeanisation happens in many channels at the same time, but it does not happen by itself, there must be some actors or agency who creates processes of Europeanisation. The process of Europeanisation happens in the policy networks of spatial planning where stakeholders formulate the common EU policies and agendas. This is an interactive process between the EU, member states and interest groups. Process includes mediation between member states and putting together national interests and the EU's interests. Thus, the process transforms and creates new institutions and governance when agendas are put in practices in new geographical scales (Marques et al. 2018, 550.)

Thus, Europeanisation is a politico-social as well as a spatial process, where actors in spatial planning share good practices, adapt national documents to the European model, interpret the EU policies and implement them. Moreover, it transforms institutions and administrative culture, and it can harmonize the ways of governance. Outcomes of processes can be very different in diverse geographical and institutional contexts of member states. (Marques et al., 2018, 550-551.) Actors, such as stakeholders, have a crucial role in the process, networks are not coming by itself it really depends on interrelations between them and later on their visions and practices.

Networks of territorial cohesion create vertical and horizontal interactions amongst stakeholders at different scales and through many policy fields and between spatial unites. It aims for balanced development between regions and to increase overall competitiveness of the EU. It is like forming a one EU unit based on networking and interactions between different stakeholders. This spatial dimension and diversity of administrative or political unites in the field makes the process multi-layered. All actors do not participate at the same time in the process and there are different process and realities happening at the same time in different degree of intensity. (Marques et al., 2018, 551-552.) Thus, Europeanisation happens in different spaces and networks. Therefore, the Territorial Agenda of the EU is a framework for Europeanisation which can have various outcomes.

4. Methodological background and research material

Research originates from the social constructionism and I chose to use concurrent mixed methods and include both open- and close-ended questions. I decided to use mixed methods and do the online survey, because it is an effective way to collect data from wide geographical area. Also, to study how stakeholders understand territorial cohesion and individual worldviews associated to the European territoriality open-ended questions allow participants express their opinions freely. If this would be done only by close-ended questions it would limit the stakeholders to choose from predetermined questions and thus limit and orient their words. For the evaluation purposes of the study, it is useful to use structured quantitative questions, that are comparable to each other and easy to synthesize. To avoid orienting the stakeholders' responses too much some questions were accompanied by a possibility to elaborate their answers. This makes it possible to generalise and build an overview of the topic, but at the same time gain in depth knowledge about the topic.

Survey was a good way to give the stakeholders anonymous voice and possibility to give feedback about the TAEU. Also, it made it possible for other stakeholders outside of the NTCCP elite circle to participate in the EU-level policymaking. I could have done an analysis of policy documents related to territorial cohesion, but such documents have been analysed already several times (see e.g. Medeiros, 2016; Marques et al. 2018; Nosek, 2017). I therefore found it more interesting to ask from individuals what they think, compare and investigate differences between people who are engaged to those who are less engaged in the EU circles. And eventually see if there is a collective understanding of the meaning of territorial cohesion and European territoriality. Of course, some might hold their tongues due to their positions but still it is more interesting and richer way to approach the topic than policy analysis in my opinion.

4.1. Evaluation study by mixed methods

Open questions permit to study the stakeholders' perceptions inductively, which emphasis what can be found out by this particular study. Qualitative questions are analysed by classification by level of governance and aim is to synthesize findings in thematical manner. Quantitative questions will be analysed by descriptive statistic and cross-tables in order to find answers to the research questions. I approach the data from the perspective of social constructionism by analysing language and meanings. Moreover, aim is to test my hypotheses on social and geopolitical imaginaries and Europeanisation, which are presented in the following chapter 4.1.1.

I chose to use the mixed methods because it seemed a better way to have simple survey questions that are fast to answer (quantitative questions with scales and predetermined options) and complete them with some open questions in order to capture respondents' perspectives by forcing them to write down their own answers. In this manner, the collected data complete each other and gives more in depth understanding of the topic instead of relying only in one method (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, 43).

First, I will use quantitative methods and descriptive statistics to familiarize with the data. Then I use qualitative methods for deeper analysis of stakeholder's perceptions. When this is done carefully mixed methods support each other.

4.1.1. Quantitative methods

For the quantitative analysis, I am using mainly descriptive statistics such as frequencies, median and distribution percentages. 62 stakeholders participated in the study, which is not ideal for making correlation or regression analysis, which was my first idea. In addition, the collected data set are abundant and combining both qualitative and quantitative analysis is time-consuming. Therefore, there is no reason to invest in complex statistical analysis, which would not be reliable due to the small sample size. Instead, descriptive statistics, cross-tables, visualisations and weighting responses is enough when the quantitative analysis is also accompanied by the qualitative analysis. Thus, my quantitative analysis relays in describing distributions and cross-tables.

The cross-tables include two variables, level of governance and depending on question scalar ordinal variable such as 'expected impact in territorial cohesion', which are transformed into numerical scale. The cross-tables permit synthesize information in simple format and describe connections between variables (Alkula, Pöntinen & Ylöstalo, 1994,175). Other used techniques are visualisations of data by pie and bar charts and then analysing those. The study is based on the mixed methods, for framing the analysis I formulated the following hypotheses which will be tested:

I hypothesize that there are differences in understanding of the territorial cohesion and role of the territorial cohesion amongst stakeholders. These differences can be explained by background variables such as level of governance, policy field of actor, engagement in the EU networks and familiarity of the TAEU.

Secondly, I hypothesize that expectations for impact, effectiveness and utility of the TAEU are modest due to the non-binding nature of the document. Results are rather linked to a process of Europeanisation such as sharing good practices, policy harmonization, common learning and cooperation & coordination (thus, to the open method of coordination).

4.1.2. Qualitative methods

Qualitative analysis is like art, there is no one right way to it and it is always researcher's choice how to do it (Patton, 2002, 432). There are methodology books like the Miles et al., (2014), which I use as a guideline, but after all, I must choose my own way of doing research. Thus, the research depends on researcher's choices and personal preferences and qualities. One of the disadvantages of qualitative research is that fellow researchers might end up having different findings, even when using the same techniques. To overcome this issue, my aim is to be transparent and describe the analysis process as detailed as possible to ensure that the study is credible and repeatable. In addition, I am using quantitative analysis, which is more dependent on research techniques, which should compensate some of the disadvantages of using only qualitative techniques (Miles et al., 2014, 43). Aim is to link the qualitative and quantitative data together to have better understanding of the topic. The quantitative characteristics make it easier to filter the data according to the background information and qualitative open questions give respondents more freedom to express their opinion instead of predetermined answer options.

The analysis is done manually with assistance of excel. In total, there were 62 responses which is very manageable by the manual analysis. Moreover, the research was designed by me in order to answer in my specific research questions and test the hypotheses, therefore only a little transformation of data during the analysis was needed. My research tactic for the qualitative research is as follows (after Miles et al., 2014, 173-178):

- 1) I will classify the answers after stakeholder grouping, because the fundamental aim is to see if there are differences in evaluation of the agenda between stakeholders. This is called cross-case study approach by groups of 'people' (Patton, 2002, 439). After the analysis is done question by question.
- 2) I will do the first coding inductively, really looking into what comes up from the data.

- 3) After that, I try to summarize findings and link them to theory in the analysis and discussion.

4.2. Survey design and sampling method

The starting point for the survey was to formulate a questionnaire that aims to collect data to test the hypotheses which were formulated based on the previous studies and theories of the topic. My sampling strategy was to target stakeholders from each member state and from all levels of governance. Through my internship, I had the possibility to do the survey in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment of Finland. The ministry was also planning to do a stakeholder consultation for the NTCCP network, which made it possible to integrate my questionnaire in the same survey. The NTCCP is a logical group to be involved in my research because it represents well member states and quite well different levels of governance. However, to improve representation of different level of governance the NTCCP members were asked to disseminate the survey for relevant stakeholders in their countries. The research area is quite large and therefore, easiest way collect data was to do the online survey. The survey was open access, which means in theory, that anyone finding the survey website could participate in the study. The survey was powered by the webropol-survey tool.

The survey was divided in two parts, the part A of the survey included question related to the renewal process of the TAEU (Ministry's questionnaire) and the part B of the survey questions related to the master's thesis research (see Annex 1 survey sheet). 299 responses were registered for the part A and 62 responses for the part B. The lower answering rate of respondents on the section B might be due to the heaviness of the survey, since the part A included already 10 questions (13 questions if elaboration options included) and the section B 10 questions (16 questions if elaboration possibilities included). Moreover, answering was voluntary and participants were asked if they want to continue answering into the section B. 20% of participants choose to continue in the section B. It was a risk to put this question there because answering 'no' would end the survey. Still, I think it might have improved the quality of answers because only people motivated enough continued answering. Since the sampling is based on targeting of certain group of people still in quite random matter, answering rate cannot be indicated. However, in theory the answering rate was 20% if we compare it to the people participating in the section A of the survey.

The secondary aim for this thesis is to bring some policy input and help to ameliorate effectiveness of the agenda, for example finding some ways for operationalising it. A public consultation open for everyone is a way to improve transparency and allow citizens and societal actors to participate on policy process (Demidov, 2017, 213-214). Therefore, the survey itself was a way to inform stakeholders and engage them in the public policy process. The survey was promoted by the ESPON and there was a small announcement leading to the survey on the TAEU renewal website (see ESPON, 2020).

4.3. Instrumentation

I had my tentative research questions and hypotheses, which worked as a guideline for the survey. However, the research questions might change during the process, and I wanted to collect enough data to be able to do both the quantitative and qualitative analysis and still adapt the orientation of my thesis during the process. Therefore, the survey might have been long, but I paid attention to make it logical, visually clear and including questions with predetermined options and scales, and I only used open questions when absolutely necessary. At the end, I had to edit out some of the questions, because otherwise the thesis would have been too long and lose its focus. Therefore, some of the questions were incoherent.

Moreover, I wanted to avoid misunderstandings, which is a common risk in online surveys where researcher and participants do not communicate, by including definitions such as effectiveness, role, utility in the study (I used the Cambridge dictionary definitions). For the purposes of evaluation, I used the scalar questions that are comparable to each other (Miles et al., 2014,39.) The data were collected in that manner that responses on background questions at the section A can be linked to the respondents who completed the section B, to avoid double questioning participants.

I asked first comments of the survey draft from my supervisors at the university and co-workers at the Ministry of the Environment. After this one test drive was done for the Task force group of the NTCCP for the renewal of the TAEU before publishing the final survey online. I adapted the survey according these comments and finally it was opened 12 December 2019 and closed 31 January 2020. The survey invitation was accompanied with a letter indicating purpose of the study and number of questions. The sections A and B were clearly separated from each other and both started with a proper introduction. Due to the timing over holiday season, we decided to keep the survey open approximately 7 weeks instead of only first planned 3-4 weeks. Two notices were sent

by email to the NTCCP members before the closing date of the survey to encourage them to participate. To see the survey sheet, see annex 1, the survey in adapted format for the thesis.

4.4. Position of the researcher and ethics

I consider myself as insider because I have participated into the meetings of the NTCCP and DG TC during my internship at the ministry of the Environment, where the TAEU renewal process was taken forward. My aim is to keep the research as neutral as possible relying on existing literature, studies and theory about territorial cohesion. My personal experiences are not included in the study and the research is based on the data collected by the survey. However, when interpreting language and meanings researcher's personal world view affects and orients always the research and it is not possible to be completely neutral.

Sometimes it was hard to change the 'hat' of being a trainee at the ministry and being a university student with academic interests. In certain times, I felt like my academic interests and questioning of the topic were not welcomed while the NTCCP members worked hard to progress with the renewal. My personal aim during the internship and master's thesis process was simply to understand better how the EU-lead territorial public policies are made, what are the issues and advantages of them, and eventually how the TAEU process and policy results could be improved. Another aim was to gain academic and work experience with the EU policymaking and learn new in order to specialize in the field.

The European network of spatial planning and territorial cohesion is quite small, especially amongst those involved in the renewal process, therefore my aim is to keep the analysis in general level in that manner that responses cannot be associated to any individuals. For ethical reasons, responses are analysed mainly based on level governance and thematic and content-based manner. The participants were asked to leave their contact information, if they would like to be interviewed or informed when the final thesis is published, by separate survey form. This information would not be connected in any ways to the survey answers. This was my back-up plan, if the survey would fail in some ways, I could still do interviews of voluntary stakeholders. Luckily, the survey was success and there was no need to do additional interviews. It could have been useful for deepen the analysis but already using mixed methods and taking in consideration of the limitation of master's thesis this would have been time-consuming and unnecessary.

5. Results and analysis

This section presents the survey results and analysis. The first chapter familiarizes with background of stakeholders, the second chapter focuses on meanings of territorial cohesion, the third section is about imaginaries and the fourth section treats impacts, effectiveness and utility of the TAEU. The fifth chapter focuses on roles and the last chapter discusses of validity of the research.

5.1. Background of the respondents

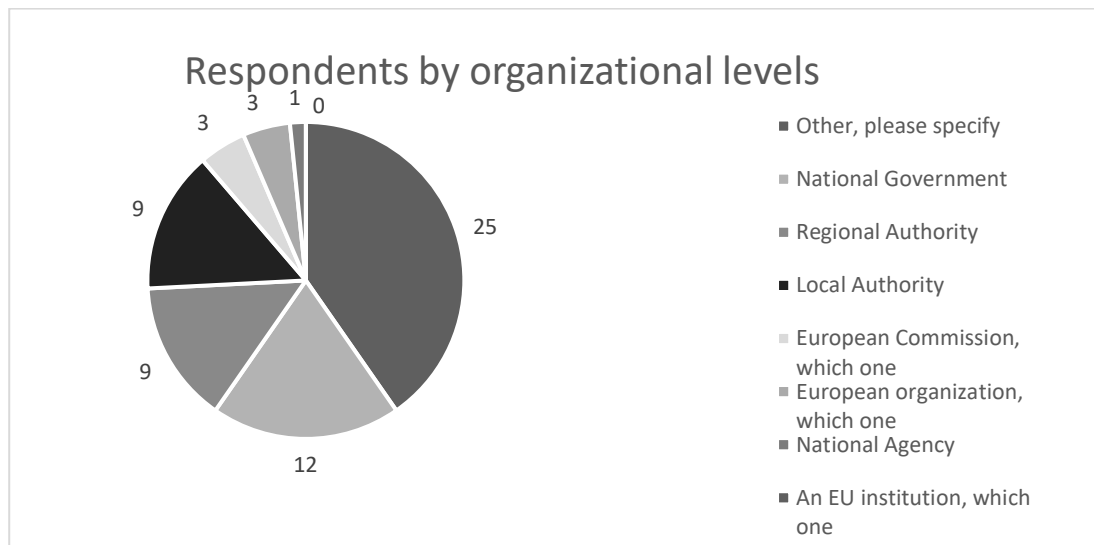


Figure 1: Participants of the survey by organisational levels. source: Mervi Hemminki, 2020

In total, 62 stakeholders participated in the survey as the figure 1 illustrates. 25 of the respondents choose the “other” option, 11 of them specified that they represent academics. Rest of the “other” group specified being private enterprises, consultants, associations or representing several levels of governance instead of one mentioned in the options. 12 respondents were national governments, 9 regional authorities and 9 local authorities. 3 respondents represent the European Commission, 3 respondents from European organisations and 10 represent national agencies. None of respondents choose the EU institution option. Thus, the sample represents well various levels of governance.

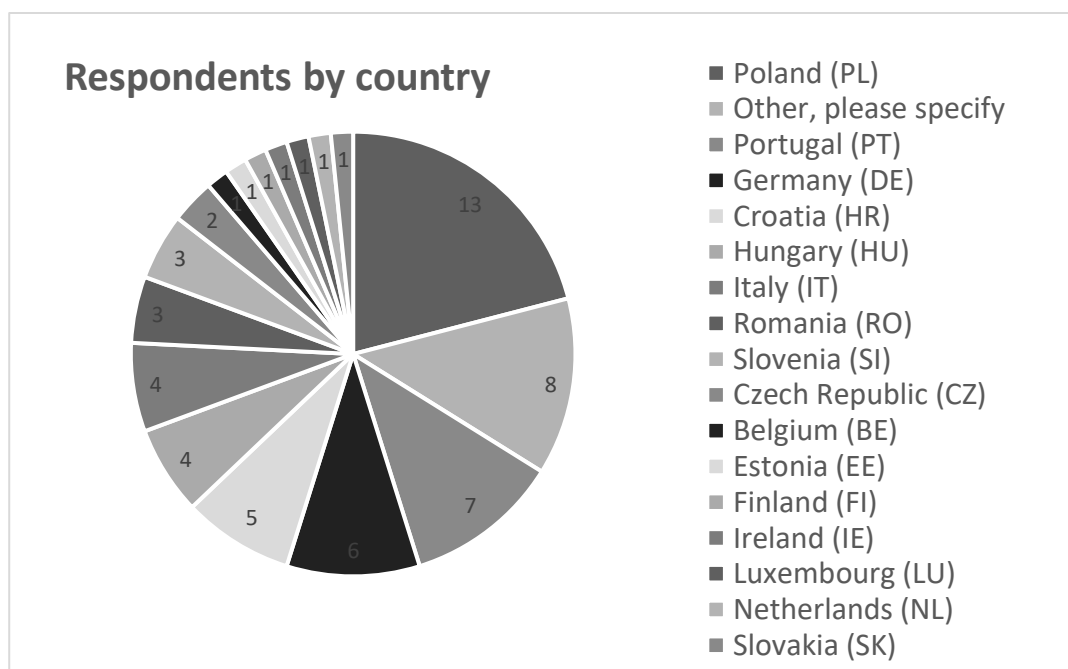


Figure 2: Participants of the survey by country. source: Mervi Hemminki, 2020

From geographical point of view the survey collected responses from various European countries as the figure 2 demonstrates. Number of respondents according to countries were as follows Poland 13, Other 8 (mainly EU organizations), Portugal 7, Germany, 6, Croatia 5, Hungary 4, Italy, 4, Romania 3, Slovenia 3, Czech Republic 2 and 1 respondent from each of the following countries Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovakia. There were no responses from the following counties: Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom. (N.B. United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland did not participate actively to the renewal process during Finland's presidency of the council of the EU.)

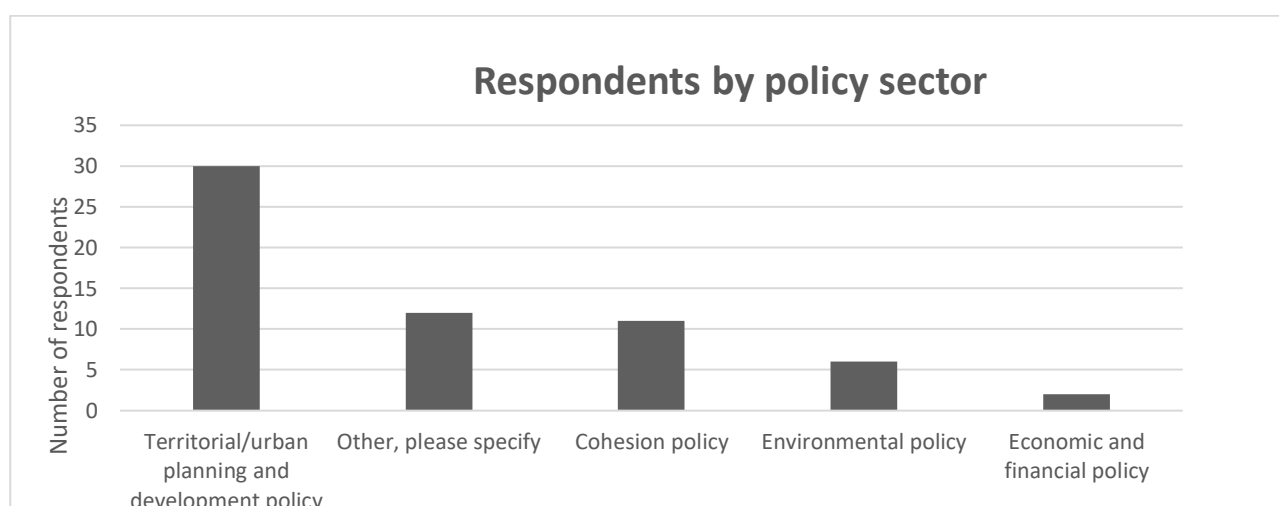


Figure 3: Participants by policy sectors. source: Mervi Hemminki, 2020

The respondents work mainly on territorial/urban planning and development policy sectors (30 respondents) as the figure 3 illustrates. 12 respondents chose the other option (and specified working on sectors such as education, social, cultural housing or several policy sectors), 11 respondents work on cohesion policy and 6 on environmental policy and 2 respondents work on economic and financial policy. None of the respondents chose the options ‘social policy’ or ‘Agricultural policy’. Thus, stakeholders’ background is relevant for the purposes of studying territorial cohesion policy.

5.2. Meaning of territorial cohesion

In question 12, respondents were asked *how would you define "Territorial Cohesion" ?* Main findings of the analysis are presented in the following table and followed by a summary of the meanings of territorial cohesion.

<p><i>National Governments</i></p> <p>Respondents from national governments emphasized balanced development and convergence of regions (mentioned 6 times) in their definitions of territorial cohesion. Equality of chances, reducing inequalities, cooperation and connections were mentioned as well. Also, sustainable development was mentioned two times. Some respondents referred to economic and social cohesion as definers of territorial cohesion, which is in line with literature on territorial cohesion. However, this should not be seen as simple sum of the two but also as including the territorial point of view (Faludi, 2016).</p> <p>The answer 44 refers to shared values of community forming a society. Thus, it embodies a social imaginary of Europe and takes into consideration social dimension of territorial cohesion. Acceptance of shared values and a common goal contributes to a common imaginary and understanding of the concept.</p>
<p><i>Answer 44: "Territorial cohesion is the objective of the Union's space development policy. -- --Territorial cohesion is the whole of the relations between territories and human groups that inhabit it, for which the human group recognizes and shares within it the territory, the intrinsic values, the kind of life that characterizes it, the socio-political organization built, together and with rules shared and accepted."</i></p>
<p><i>Regional Authorities</i></p>

Definitions of regional authorities highlighted securing equal chances and minimizing disparities (mentioned 3 times). Other themes were balanced development, cooperation, connections and valorisation of territorial capital. Hence, definitions of territorial cohesion by national and regional authorities are similar.

The answer 62 emphasizes territorial approach and social imaginary of Europe by seeing the TAEU framework, as an attempt to materialize it by territorialization. It shows both the idea of territorial approach and integrated development. It also, shows that there is a common background idea of Europe and territorialisation of the political community.

Answer 62: "As the result of Territorial Agenda aims to materialize the territorial organization model, considering the strategic options and territorial challenges, resulting in commitments for the territory, which reflect the strong ideas of public policy bets for the valorisation of the territory and for the reinforcement of integrated approaches to territorial base."

Local Authorities

Local authorities defined territorial cohesion by territorial equality and guaranteeing same basics for territories (mentioned 3 times). Moreover, cooperation (mentioned 3 times) and territorial approach (mentioned 2 times) were common definers of the concept.

European Commission

Respondents from the European Commission emphasized territorial cooperation and dependencies, integrated approach, balanced development and acknowledgement of territorial differences in their definitions.

European organizations

Respondents from this group mentioned unleashing territorial capital and territorial approach to development (mentioned 2 times) as definers of territorial cohesion. Balanced development and equal chances were common themes too.

Others

Respondents from the 'other' group mentioned (6 times) less inequalities between territories and solidarity in their definitions. Unleashing territorial capital and territorial approach to policymaking (mentioned 4 times) as well as balanced development (3 times) were mentioned too. Also, sustainable development and cooperation were included in definitions. As the answer 42 illustrates, territorial cohesion is a means that benefits all and territorial approach is a key for effective policymaking. The answer 39 highlights territorial capital and coherence of territorial approach to other policies in definition of the concept.

Answer42: “Territorial cohesion is a means to enhance the conditions in all territories. It is the way to make the best use of territorial diversity across Europe by making use of a regions’ strengths and at the same time working to reduce their weaknesses. As a spatial principle, it must permeate all relevant European policies and enhance their effectiveness.”

Answer 39: “Territorial cohesion is development based on endogenous resources of territories. It is also the use of territorial tools (such as the delimitation of functional areas) in sectoral policies.”

Summary of the key findings of the meanings of the territorial cohesion

Based on the survey, stakeholders have reasonably similar understanding of meaning of territorial cohesion. Overarching themes for defining the concept were balanced development, less inequalities between territories, equal chances, solidarity, territorial approach and cooperation. Results are in line with the given definition of territorial cohesion earlier in this thesis in chapter 2.1.1 and indicate that there is some kind of common understanding of the concept. Academics have outlined the many meanings of territorial cohesion as policy objective and means to achieve cohesion. Means and territorial tools were somewhat present in the responses. Increase competitiveness was not mentioned, even if it is in the core of the territorial cohesion policy according to the European Commission (European Commission, 2008 & *unknown date*). Thus, the results indicate that other dimensions are prioritised instead of economic dimension according to the stakeholders.

Furthermore, responses included several aspects of territorial cohesion but only a few of them included all of the four dimensions, which are social, environmental, economic and territorial (Medeiros, 2016). The respondents mentioned mainly two of these dimensions such as territorial and social cohesion or environmental and territorial cohesion.

There were not significant differences in defining territorial cohesion between respondent groups. However, national and regional level authorities referred more to a strategical approach and territorialisation of the political community. Their responses embodied some kind of territorial vision or plan to be achieved by means of the TAEU. They mentioned shared values and common goal as definers of territorial cohesion. Rest of the respondents focused more on practical issues, territorial tools and value of territorial approach in their definitions of territorial cohesion. Thus, the term territorial cohesion in itself does not seem to include strong imaginaries as such. Rather it is perceived as a political goal for the future development of European society and territories, which is characterized by social and territorial cohesion.

5.3. Imaginaries about the EU territoriality

In question 13 stakeholders were asked *how would you define the "territories", which the Territorial Agenda aims to influence?* Main findings of the analysis are grouped after level of governance in the following table and followed by a summary of the key findings.

<i>National Governments</i>
<p>Respondents from national governments defined the territories that the TAEU aims to influence as follows. 6 of responses referred to ‘all type of territories’ and some argued that the territories do not need definition since the TAEU targets all kind of territories in Europe from many overlapping scales as the answer 48 summarizes.</p> <p>Also, relative definitions of territories such as functional regions, cross-border and NUTS-2 regions were mentioned. Another interesting observation was related to social aspects of territory, whereby territory should not be seen only as an administrative unit or territorial category, but also as social systems and units. Other mentioned the backwardness of regions as the main criteria for being the target territory of the TAEU. Thus, respondents understood the question in many ways.</p>
<i>Answer 48: "no need to do so. Territorial Agenda is about all types of territories"</i>
<i>National Agency</i>
<p>There was only one response from this group, which quoted all kind of territories and linkages to global sphere. Thus, the TAEU is not limited only to Europe it has a global dimension too.</p>
<i>Regional Authorities</i>
<p>Regional authorities defined the TAEU targeted territories mainly as regions and functional areas such as Nuts II & III. Thus, they refer to the relative understanding of European territoriality. Some mentioned networks, which indicates networked understanding of European territoriality. As the answer 61 captures territories refers to all kind of spaces in various levels. Respondents mentioned the relative understanding of territory as well.</p>
<i>Answer 61: "TA describes territories quite broad (states, regions, counties, municipalities). It seems that regions and functional areas are the most relevant levels for implementation TA aims and rules"</i>
<i>Local Authorities</i>
<p>Local authorities defined the TAEU territories in many ways. Responses referred to administrative units such as member states and other administrative unites from hierarchical perspective such as country, region/areas, sub-region, localities. Other definitions were based on natural, political,</p>

historical entities or people's daily life sphere. Also 'all type of territories' were mentioned and linkages to the global.

European Commission

Respondents from the EC defined the TAEU territories by relative and borderless spaces. Functional regions and cooperation were definers of the territories. Also, overlapping scales were mentioned and borderless European territory which is not limited by member states territories.

European organizations

Respondents from this group defined the territories mainly as relative spaces. Functional areas such as regions, cross-border regions and spaces defined by cooperation and partnerships were cited. One mentioned that functional regions should not focus only urban but also rural and natural areas. The urban should not be prioritized over the rural, both have value and should be approached by functional thinking in other words, the relative understanding of space and some aspects of networks were captured in these responses.

Others

In responses of the other group there were two competing understandings of the TAEU target territories. 8 responses mentioned administrative limits and 6 responses argued that the limitation should not be based on administrative boundaries rather it should be based on geographical, functional, social or historical limitation of spatial units such as regions. Some responses included both administrative and non-administrative limitations as the answer 60 illustrates.

Others mentioned regions and multiple scales. Scales referred rather to level of governance instead of geographical scales. These are seen sometimes as synonyms, sometimes as opposites when administrative boundaries and geographical limitations conflict. The answers 34 & 38 illustrate geographical and social limitations of territories instead of administrative limitations.

Answer 34: "Territories at various geographical scale not related to administrative boundaries but constituted by functional relations.—"

Answer 38: "regions - formal or historical or other kind but where people have the feeling of ownership"

Answer 60: "Not only administrative or statistical units (NUTS), but also functional areas (e.g. strategic intervention areas, urban functional areas and others)."

Summary of the key findings of the territorial imaginaries

Similar answers such as 'all kind of territories', 'multi scalar' and 'mainly relative or networked understandings' occurred in all of the respondent groups. Interesting debate was found from the other group in which the respondents were divided on those who think that administrative boundaries are

main criteria for defining territories and those who think that administrative boundaries should not be used as criteria, instead focus should be on cooperation-based limitations such as functional areas, cross-border connections and integrated approach. In other words, this can be summarized as debate between the territorial and the relative understanding of space. Some respondents accept both criteria for defining territories. Also, social dimension of territories such as feelings and people's daily life spheres were mentioned in couple of responses.

Overall, there is some kind of common understandings and approaches to European territoriality. The relative and networked understanding of territory is associated to the TAEU and accepted by majority of respondents. It seems that the EU is seen as one territorial unit and taken for granted, since this was not questioned by the respondents. However, the targeted territories remain fuzzy and there is no strict criteria, networks and relational spaces work both.

5.4. Expectations on impact, effectiveness and utility of the TAEU 2030

This section is based on the following questions: 17) *What are your expectations on the impact of the renewed TA on the following themes?* 19) *What are your expectations for the effectiveness of the renewed TA in achieving territorial cohesion?* and 18) *What you think about the utility of the Territorial Agenda as a framework for actions towards territorial cohesion?*

5.4.1 The expected impacts of the TAEU

Respondents were asked to evaluate the expected impacts of the TAEU on several themes. Here, I present the most interesting results of the question 17: *What are your expectations on the impact of the renewed TA on the following themes?* This question was followed by an open question where stakeholders were asked to elaborate, how these impacts are expected to be achieved. To shorten the analysis only the most relevant findings are presented. To generalise analysis, I have done weighting of the responses the 'strong' refers to 'very strong' and 'strong' impacts (+/++) and the 'weak' refers to 'weak' and 'very weak' impacts (-/--). The 'Fair' in the middle refers to numbers of respondents choosing the middle option. In all questions, the responses are quite dispersed amongst all of the respondents' groups and there are no significant differences are found based on the level of governance.

	Very Strong	Strong	Fair	Weak	Very weak	Unable to answer	Average	Median
achieving territorial cohesion	17,74 %	32,26 %	29,03 %	9,68 %	4,84 %	6,45 %	2,48	2
strengthening EU integration	9,68 %	40,32 %	24,19 %	11,29 %	9,68 %	4,84 %	2,69	2
coordinating EU spatial planning	8,07 %	27,42 %	30,65 %	17,74 %	8,06 %	8,06 %	2,89	3
improving connectivity & accessibility	11,29 %	41,94 %	30,64 %	6,45 %	4,84 %	4,84 %	2,49	2
achieving economic cohesion	6,45 %	33,87 %	25,81 %	19,36 %	6,45 %	8,06 %	2,84	3
improving EU economic competitiveness	8,07 %	29,03 %	33,87 %	16,13 %	8,06 %	4,84 %	2,86	3
improving services of general interest	4,84 %	37,09 %	32,26 %	11,29 %	4,84 %	9,68 %	2,71	3
Reducing social inequalities	12,90 %	25,81 %	38,71 %	9,68 %	8,06 %	4,84 %	2,73	3
overcoming demographic and societal challenges	12,90 %	14,52 %	40,32 %	14,52 %	11,29 %	6,45 %	2,97	3
bringing EU closer to its citizens	14,51 %	27,42 %	32,26 %	14,52 %	6,45 %	4,84 %	2,69	3
achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals	11,29 %	43,55 %	27,42 %	3,22 %	4,84 %	9,68 %	2,41	2
improving climate change adaptation and mitigation	22,58 %	41,94 %	24,19 %	3,23 %	1,61 %	6,45 %	2,14	2
achieving environmental sustainability	17,74 %	35,48 %	30,65 %	6,45 %	3,23 %	6,45 %	2,38	2
improving quality of government and governance	8,07 %	41,94 %	24,19 %	11,29 %	8,06 %	6,45 %	2,67	2
improving well-being of citizens	11,29 %	32,26 %	25,81 %	16,13 %	6,45 %	8,06 %	2,72	3
improving employment	4,84 %	29,03 %	22,58 %	24,19 %	9,68 %	9,68 %	3,05	3

Figure 4: Table above: Expected impacts of the TAEU in following themes in %, and Figure 5: legend below: nominal and numerical scale of the question 17., Mervi Hemminki, 2021.

1 = Very Strong	2 = Strong	3 = Fair	4 = Weak	5 = Very weak	0 = Unable to answer
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As the figure 5 legend above indicates, the smaller the number, the stronger the impact and the bigger the number the weaker the impact. Thus, the median and average follow this logic, the smaller the median or average the bigger is the expected impact and the bigger is the median or average the weaker is expected impact. The ‘unable to answer’ option do not affect the result since the value for it is 0. Averages vary between 2,14 and 3,05, which indicates that expected impacts in all themes are fair or strong (see figure 4). Average is calculated by sum of all observations divided by number of observations. Medians (number that divides cases in two groups, higher and lower half) vary between 2 and 3, in other words, between strong and fair impact as well. (Rogerson, 2010, 28; Dumolard, Dubus & Charleux, 2003, 94.) Thus, there is not big differences in expected impacts of the TAEU.

As we can see from the figure 4 ‘Expected impacts of the TAEU in following themes in %’, the median and average values are very close to each other. Therefore, further development of this is not needed because all of the distributions are normal. Only interesting observation is when the values of median and average are 2, then 50% of responses is composed by ‘very strong’ (1) and ‘strong’ (2) and another half by ‘fair’ (3), ‘weak’ (4) and ‘very weak’ (5). When median and average are close to 3, then distribution is rather dispersed as follows, ‘very strong’ (1), ‘strong’ (2), ‘fair’ (3) in one half and on the other ‘weak’ (4) and ‘very weak’ (5). Since there is no big variation in these, I think it is more interesting to focus on the percentage in the cross-table.

I have highlighted the most outstanding findings in red in the figure 4. 23% of respondents expect ‘very strong’ impacts in improving climate change adaptation and mitigation. 18% of respondents expect ‘very strong’ impacts in both achieving territorial cohesion and achieving

environmental sustainability. The ‘Strong’ impacts are expected in achieving UN sustainable development goals (44%), improving climate change adaptation and mitigation (42%), improving quality of government and governance (42%), improving accessibility and connectivity (42%) and strengthening the EU integration (40%). The ‘Fair’ impact is expected in overcoming demographic and societal challenges (40%) and in reducing social inequalities (39%). The ‘Weakest’ impacts are expected in improving employment (24%), coordinating the EU spatial planning (18%) and improving well-being of citizens (16%). The ‘Very weak’ impact is expected in overcoming demographic and societal challenges (11%), strengthening the EU integration (10%) and improving employment (10%). Overall, impacts are expected to be strong or fair in all themes.

5.4.1.1 Expected impacts on certain themes

Improving climate change adaptation and mitigation

		Q17) improving climate change adaptation and mitigation						Total
		Unable to answer	Very Strong	Strong	Fair	Weak	Very weak	
Q1) Which organizational level do you work with?	National Government	1	3	3	4	0	1	12
	National Agency	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Regional Authority	0	4	2	2	1	0	9
	Local Authority	0	2	3	3	1	0	9
	European Commission, which one	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
	European organization, which one	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
	Other, please specify	3	3	13	6	0	0	25
Total		4	14	26	15	2	1	62

Figure 6: Expected impacts in improving climate change adaptation and mitigation in frequency simple, Mervi Hemminki, 2020

Respondents evaluated the TAEU’s expected impact in improving climate change adaptation and mitigation as follows: 26 ‘strong’, 15 ‘fair’, 14 ‘very strong’, 4 ‘unable to answer’, 2 ‘weak’ and 1 ‘very weak’ and as the figure 6 illustrates. Weight of responses is on the ‘strong’ impact side 40 (+/++), 15 fair and ‘weak’ impact side 3 (-/--). This is the strongest expected impact of the renewed TAEU. Also, other impacts related to the environmental dimensions of territorial cohesion (achieving environmental sustainability and UN sustainable development goals) are expected to be strong.

Achieving territorial cohesion

		Q17) achieving territorial cohesion						Total
		Unable to answer	Very Strong	Strong	Fair	Weak	Very weak	
Q1) Which organizational level do you work with?	National Government	0	3	4	3	1	1	12
	National Agency	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Regional Authority	0	1	4	3	1	0	9
	Local Authority	0	2	2	2	2	1	9
	European Commission, which one	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
	European organization, which one	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
	Other, please specify	4	3	7	8	2	1	25
Total		4	11	20	18	6	3	62

Figure 7: Expected impact in achieving territorial cohesion in frequency simple, Mervi Hemminki, 2020

The respondents evaluated the expected impact of the TAEU in achieving territorial cohesion as follows: 20 respondents selected ‘strong’, 18 ‘fair’, 11 ‘very strong’, 6 ‘weak’, 3 ‘very weak’ and 4 were ‘unable to answer’. Weight is on the ‘strong’ impact side 31 (++/+) against 9 (--/-) and 18 in the middle with ‘fair’. Thus, the expected impact in territorial cohesion is strong as the figure 7 illustrates.

Reducing social inequalities

		Q17) Reducing social inequalities						Total
		Unable to answer	Very Strong	Strong	Fair	Weak	Very weak	
Q1) Which organizational level do you work with?	National Government	0	3	3	3	2	1	12
	National Agency	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Regional Authority	0	0	5	2	2	0	9
	Local Authority	0	1	3	3	1	1	9
	European Commission, which one	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
	European organization, which one	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
	Other, please specify	3	3	4	12	1	2	25
Total		3	8	16	24	6	5	62

Figure 8: Expected impact in reducing social inequalities in frequency simple, Mervi Hemminki, 2020

The respondents evaluated the TAEU’s expected impact in reducing social inequalities as follows: 24 ‘fair’, 16 ‘strong’, 8 ‘very strong’, 6 ‘weak’, 5 ‘very weak’ and 3 ‘unable to answer’ and as the figure 8 shows. In synthesized form 24 (+/++), 11 (-/--) and 24 in the middle with ‘fair’. The fair group is as big as the strong group; thus, the expected impacts in this theme are strong and fair. This is interesting finding since both are mentioned in the key sentence of defining the territorial cohesion: ‘reducing social inequalities and increasing competitiveness’ (European Commission, 2008).

Improving economic competitiveness

		Q17) improving EU economic competitiveness						Total
		Unable to answer	Very Strong	Strong	Fair	Weak	Very weak	
Q1) Which organizational level do you work with?	National Government	0	1	5	3	2	1	12
	National Agency	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Regional Authority	0	1	3	3	2	0	9
	Local Authority	0	1	2	3	2	1	9
	European Commission, which one	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
	European organization, which one	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
	Other, please specify	3	2	6	8	4	2	25
Total		3	5	18	21	10	5	62

Figure 9: Expected impact in improving economic competitiveness in frequency simple, Mervi Hemminki, 2020

The respondents evaluated expected impact of the TAEU in improving EU economic competitiveness as follows: 21 ‘fair’, 18 ‘strong’, 10 ‘weak’, 5 ‘very strong’, 5 ‘very weak’, and 3 ‘unable to answer’ and as the figure 9 illustrates. Weight of responses is on the ‘strong’ impact side 23 (+/++) against 15 (-/--) and 21 in the middle with ‘fair’. Thus, the expected impact in improving the EU’s economic competitiveness is strong.

Coordinating the EU spatial planning

		Q17) coordinating EU spatial planning						Total
		Unable to answer	Very Strong	Strong	Fair	Weak	Very weak	
Q1) Which organizational level do you work with?	National Government	0	1	4	2	4	1	12
	National Agency	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Regional Authority	1	1	2	5	0	0	9
	Local Authority	1	0	1	4	2	1	9
	European Commission, which one	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
	European organization, which one	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
	Other, please specify	3	2	7	5	5	3	25
Total		5	5	17	19	11	5	62

Figure 10: Expected impact in coordinating EU spatial planning in frequency simple, Mervi Hemminki, 2020

The respondents evaluated the TAEU's expected impacts in coordinating the EU spatial planning as follows: 19 'fair', 17 'strong', 11 'weak', 5 'very strong' and 5 'very weak' and 5 were 'unable to answer' as the figure 10 above illustrates. Weight is on the 'strong' impact side with 22 (++/+) against 16 (-/--) expecting 'weak' impacts. 19 respondents expect 'fair' impact.

Improving employment

		Q17) improving employment						Total
		Unable to answer	Very Strong	Strong	Fair	Weak	Very weak	
Q1) Which organizational level do you work with?	National Government	1	2	3	3	1	2	12
	National Agency	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Regional Authority	0	0	4	1	3	1	9
	Local Authority	1	0	3	2	3	0	9
	European Commission, which one	0	0	1	0	1	1	3
	European organization, which one	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
	Other, please specify	4	1	5	6	7	2	25
Total		6	3	18	14	15	6	62

Figure 11: Expected impact in improving employment in frequency simple, Mervi Hemminki, 2020

The respondents evaluated expected impact of the TAEU in improving employment as follows: 18 'strong', 15 'weak', 14 'fair', 6 'very weak', 6 'unable to answer', 3 'very strong' as the figure 11 illustrates. As a result, the respondents are divided in two between those who expect 'strong' impacts 21 (+/++) and those who expect 'weak' impacts 21 (-/--) 14 respondents expect 'fair' impacts.

Summary of the key findings of the expected impacts in the selected themes

Overall, the responses show that majority of the stakeholders expect strong or fair impacts in all the themes. There is always a minority of stakeholders who do not agree and wait weak impacts. The expected impacts in climate change adaptation and mitigation and sustainable development related themes outstand by very strong and strong impact expectations. The expected impact in territorial cohesion is also strong. There were not major differences in expectations amongst the stakeholder groups based on level of governance. These themes are based on the TAEU 2030 draft document, which lists them as main challenges to address and justification why action is needed (see Spatial

Foresight on behalf of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion, 2020a). Logically, the stakeholders expect strong impacts in these themes as they are mentioned in the agenda. Moreover, the ‘fair’ group is quite big in all themes, which indicates that some of the stakeholders expect rather modest impacts. The next section is more interesting, because there the stakeholders are asked how these impacts are expected to be achieved. Moreover, it puts the words and actions in relation and ‘what is ought to be done’ in relation with the ‘what is actually done’ and most importantly how.

5.4.2 How these impacts are achieved

The expected impact assessment question was followed by an open question: *Please elaborate, how these impacts are expected to be achieved?* Main findings of the analysis are collected in the following table after level of governance and followed by a summary of the key findings.

<i>National Governments</i>
Respondents from this group argued that the impacts are expected to be achieved by cooperation and collecting best practices and promoting them. Several respondents from national governments argued that little impacts can be expected, they acknowledged the competence issue, lack of instruments and operationalization. Some perceived the TAEU as a weak policy tool. However, some highlighted role of the TAEU as opening dialogue about issues related to territorial development. Moreover, impacts are expected to be achieved by linking other policies to the TAEU and by their implementation.
<i>Regional Authorities</i>
The answers of regional authorities were similar to national governments, they mentioned also linkages to other policies and mirroring mechanism as a key for achieving impacts. Weak impacts are expected because the TAEU is a strategical document, impact should come from implementation of other policies, funds and programs as the answer 43 captures. As the following answers illustrate, the TAEU itself does not have direct impacts. The Answer 24 even turns the logic another way around by saying that the TAEU is actually influenced by other policies, which may deliver to their similar goals and then to the TAEU goals if they are identical. Other respondent mentioned that the strength of the TAEU is promotion of territorial impacts of policies and territorial approach.

<i>Answer 24: "As stated earlier, I expect the impact of a non-binding document with rather vague principles to be very weak. The added value is in influencing the discourse of other policies or of national development policies. Here I see that major policies initiatives (Multi-annual Framework, Green Deal) have been decided before the new Territorial Agenda will be agreed. This time I think those initiatives will influence the Territorial Agenda, not the other way around."</i>
<i>Answer 43: "TA is a strategic document with no direct effect, it would be directly connected to EU policy and programmes (e.g Green new deal)"</i>
Local Authorities
Respondents from local authorities emphasized integrated approach and the EU-funded projects as tool to achieve objectives and promote best practices. As following answer 21 illustrates, there is some scepticism about the impacts, a lot can be expected but for the results we must wait. Thus, it is hard to say beforehand what kind of impacts the TAEU will achieve.
<i>Answer 21: "A lot is expected but the outcome and actions await to be seen. We would all expect a lot more to be achieved. But will anything be achieved?"</i>
European Commission
Responses of the EC emphasized value of increasing awareness of territorial dimensions of policies. Also, linkages between policies and cooperation were seen central for achieving impacts. As the following response 8 illustrates, political commitment and will to work for the objectives are a key for achieving the impacts, as well as the operationalisation of the agenda.
<i>Answer 8: "Through effective coordination and strong commitment of Member States. A political level declaration and an implementation system as elaborated as in the case of the Urban Agenda would be necessary."</i>
European organizations
Respondents from the European organizations mentioned cooperation & coordination and follow-ups of implementation as important aspects of achieving impacts. Also, the answer 46 illustrates well a realist point of view of the impacts, only if there is commitment and will achieve implement the agenda results can be achieved.
<i>Answer 46: "If Member States seriously commit to a multi-level governance approach for a concrete implementation of the principles of the Territorial Agenda, then the potential of the renewed agenda could be unleash. It is of particular importance to associate all levels and all types of sub-national governments, with a particular focus for the territories that already suffer from structural, demographic or geographic handicaps such as ageing and depopulation, or remoteness in order to truly leave no one and no place behind. However, if the implementation of the Territorial Agenda is not translated at national level other than limited number of pilot project, then the potential of the renewed agenda will be much lower"</i>
Others

Respondents from this group argued that awareness of the TAEU amongst relevant stakeholders at different levels is crucial for achieving impacts because they are key actors taking the agenda forward and implementing. Moreover, dialogue, discussion and promoting of the content of the agenda are important for achieving the impacts. Funding, EU-projects and regulations were mentioned too. Cooperation & coordination, soft tools and dialogue with public and policymakers were perceived as important aspects too as the answer 36 illustrates. The answer 45 is clearly in line with the hypothesis that the TAEU is linked to Europeanisation process of spatial planning. Also, the answer 56 is interesting since it mentions the ‘old fear’ of Europe losing its position in global competition. It illustrates how strong these geopolitical imaginaries associated to Europe are.

Answer 36 : "Using soft tools, thru cooperation between different actors"

Answer 45 : "Territorial agenda as all Europeanized policy process should to reinforce the governance and political dimension."

Answer 56 : "Taking into account a broad globalised context of contemporary development processes - which strongly determine our future - policy framework included in the renewed Agenda should mainly focus on development of economic-spatial mechanism for rising our international competitiveness. Otherwise in next 20 years the EU lost its position in the world. These crucial trends should be directly communicated to the EU citizens to build their openness for changes."

Summary of the key findings of achieving impacts

Findings are well in line with Europeanisation theory, OMC and ‘soft tools’. Means such as sharing good practices, promotion of the agenda, learning process, cooperation and coordination and linking the TAEU to other policies are mentioned as ways to achieve expected impacts. Even the answer 45 from the other group, argues that the TAEU is linked to a process of Europeanisation.

Operationalisation and implementation are mentioned several times as a way to achieve impacts. However, only one respondent mentioned the pilot actions as a way to achieve impacts, despite the fact that the TAEU 2030 introduces 6 pilot actions. It might be that the respondents were not familiar with the pilots, which were still work in progress at this stage of the drafting process. Also, there were some sceptic attitudes towards achieving the impacts. All stakeholders were not convinced that strong impacts will be achieved, rather weak ones. Some argued that it is hard to say anything about the impacts in beforehand.

5.4.2. Effectiveness of the TAEU 2030

Respondents were asked what their expectations for effectiveness of the TAEU are in achieving territorial cohesion. Main findings of the analysis are collected in the following table after level of governance and followed by a summary of the key findings.

<i>National Governments</i>
Respondents from national governments concluded that effectiveness of the TAEU in achieving territorial cohesion depends on the final format of the agenda, implementation, pilots and if concrete actions are taken to put it in practice the agenda. Adoption of the agenda by central actions and promotion of good practices are also important for ensuring effectiveness. Some respondents argued that it is better to wait and see what happens than speculate beforehand.
<i>National Agency</i>
As the response 4 illustrates, the point of having the TAEU is to achieve the objectives and to be effective, otherwise it is a meaningless document.
<i>Answer 4: "I hope that renewed TA will achieve all the expectations - actually this is a must, no room for meaningless documents anymore".</i>
<i>Regional Authorities</i>
Regional authorities state that political leadership is needed and effectiveness of the TAEU depends on how the TAEU is incorporated to other policies and programmes, and if relevant stakeholders take it seriously and implement it. If this happens effectiveness of the TAEU will be good as the following answer 61 illustrates.
<i>Answer 61 : TA has clear and well identified objectives - all member states shall keep those aims in mind, then TA will have a huge impact on territorial cohesion</i>
<i>Local Authorities</i>
Respondents from this group were hopeful about effectiveness of the TAEU as the answers 5 and 21 illustrate. Some were more realistic as the answer 20 and 27 show. The answer 27 goes into the core of European politics, if the TAEU is to become official binding agenda of the EU it must be taken forward by the EC or the council of the EU and certainly it must be the "European pentagon" the Council of the EU who decides about making of the spatial planning as EU competence and only then results can be achieved. To conclude, respondents from this group were divided by the question to those who doubt the effectiveness and those who believe in it.
<i>Answer 5: "We expect medium-level effectiveness, but hope for great success in producing the intended results."</i>
<i>Answer 20: "Depends if it's compulsory or not."</i>
<i>Answer 21: "We all live in hope. Hope springs eternal. I will just have to wait and see."</i>

Answer 27: “my expectations are that the dilemma between what to be for Europe and what the economic factor of the European pentagon lets us do is overcome that is, the powerful economic-political aggregator is transmuted and that promotes equitably the development of several polycentrisms”

European Commission

Respondent from this group pointed out role of the following presidencies in taking forward the policy. The TAEU process should not end at the publication of the new agenda, what comes after is more important for the effectiveness. One respondent emphasized in the same spirit continuation of the progress toward territorial cohesion. Support of the document and awareness of it are important aspects according to respondents from the EC.

European organizations

Respondents from this group comprehended monitoring and measuring of implementation important for effectiveness. Engagement of member states and sub-national authorities in implementation is crucial for effectiveness according to some of the respondents. Open discussion and multilevel governance are important for effectiveness and having concrete results.

Others

Some respondents from this group were sceptical about effectiveness, since the TAEU is just a basis, a strategical document, much depends on how the policy is perceived by different policymakers and stakeholders in national contexts. The soft nature of the policy explains limits of effectiveness. The delivery must come from sectoral policies and other initiatives, so these linkages are crucial for having effective agenda, some respondents argue. Other respondents were more hopeful about effectiveness and some realistic and waiting to see what will come after the adoption of the agenda. Also, some concrete actions are waited to follow as the answer 30 illustrates.

Answer 30: “It requires a supporting Framework to be effective. The strategic document itself might be a beginning, but it does not do the trick on its own.”

Summary of the key findings of effectiveness of the TAEU

Overall, stakeholders were divided by their attitudes on effectiveness of the TAEU. Some were hopeful and waiting good results, some acknowledged weaknesses of the agenda and were more realistic about the results. Some were even sceptical about its effectiveness. The agenda was perceived as a potential document, but a lot depends on political will and policymakers and stakeholders' engagement to take the agenda forward and implement it. As a result, the TAEU itself is not enough for being effective agenda, actors and agencies are needed and linkages to other policies

and programmes as results show. Thus, respondents have a good picture of the main issues and obstacles of effectiveness. Still, the general spirit was rather positive and trustful.

5.4.3. Utility of the TAEU 2030

Respondents were asked what they think about utility of the TAEU as a framework for actions towards territorial cohesion. Main findings of the analysis are collected in the following table after level of governance and followed by a summary of the key findings.

<i>National Governments</i>
National governments perceived the TAEU as a good framework for joint actions but main issue for utility is the implementation as the answers 49 and 58 illustrate. Some respondents were sceptical about its utility as the answer 48 shows and some hopeful as the answer 52 illustrates. Thus, the respondents were divided by this question.
<i>Answer 48: "Unfortunately I think that territorial Agenda is rather weak as instrument of promoting territorial cohesion."</i>
<i>Answer 49 : "As a framework of action it is a useful tool, the problem starts when the subnational government units (local and territorial governments) are having only very limited influence upon major important policy areas."</i>
<i>Answer 52: "Currently, TA is our best tool or frame for territorial cohesion. Together with the NTCCP, DG and Ministries and ESPON. Other measures will be also needed."</i>
<i>Answer 58 : "TA is still needed. actual implementation, could be an obstacle"</i>
<i>National Agency</i>
Respondent from national agency argued that the TAEU is a good general document as the answer 4 illustrates.
<i>Answer 4: "a good umbrella document"</i>
<i>Regional Authorities</i>
Regional authorities have a realistic conception about the utility of the TAEU as the following answers 24 and 43 illustrate. Some perceived it as a 'very useful' document, and some were more pessimistic. Thus, respondents were divided by this question like the respondents from national governments.
<i>Answer 24: "This will entirely depend on the final Territorial Agenda. If there is a clear action framework with objectives, pilot projects and (financial) institutional support, then there might be an influence like there was undeniably an influence from the Urban Agenda. If this lacks, then the utility will be very minimal."</i>
<i>Answer 43: "It could be a useful framework only if directly linked to operative policy and programmes"</i>
<i>Local Authorities</i>

Many respondents from this group think that the TAEU is a ‘very useful’ document. Some were more realistic and waiting for the time to come to see the actual results and utility as the following answers 3 and 5 indicate.
<i>Answer 3: “Its utility will depend on authorities' involvement.”</i>
<i>Answer 5: “From this standpoint, it seems very promising regarding its utility, but we'll see the real picture in practice...”</i>
European Commission
Respondents from the EC saw the TAEU as a useful framework, utility is the main goal of the framework as the answer 8 illustrates. Awareness and promotion of the agenda are important for popular implementation of the agenda as can be understood from the answer 58.
<i>Answer 8: “That's the main goal the TA should pursue.”</i>
<i>Answer 58: “The Territorial Agenda is very useful as a framework for actions towards territorial cohesion as it will be endorsed by the highest political level and thus has a high probability of being implemented within a reasonable timeframe.”</i>
European organizations
Respondents from European organisations argued that the TAEU is a useful and necessary agenda as the answer 41 illustrates. The answer 46 mentions promotion of common European vision and need of linking the TAEU to other policies and better acknowledgement of territorial dimensions of other policies. This comment shows how the TAEU is about the common vision or imaginary for territorial development of Europe.
<i>Answer 41: “Absolutely necessary and helpful - if the agenda will be concrete and a monitoring of the implementation will be established.”</i>
<i>Answer 46 : “The Territorial Agenda 2020 is useful to promote the European vision for territorial development, but its goals are currently not sufficiently considered in relevant EU policies. To achieve a stronger link between the TA and the work of the EU institution, a general and mandatory territorial impact assessment is needed for all legislative proposals. Furthermore, the clear link between ESIF and the TA should remain one of the priorities of the renewed TA.”</i>
Others
Respondents from other group cited the TAEU’s utility being a source of inspiration, good reference document and useful document. Some mentioned that the TAEU is certainly needed as a top document, but it is not enough as such, more actions are needed see the answers 42 and 63. Especially considering on implementation, utility depends on operationalisation, as the answers 30 and 59 illustrate. Some were more pessimistic and think that the utility of the TAEU remain small as the answer 39 shows. A lot depends on actors, if they adhere the TAEU and participate in the

implementation utility is most likely to be good. Overall, the respondents think that the TAEU's utility is reasonable but there are some obstacles as mentioned above.

Answer 30: "I find it useful. However, concrete Framework is needed to enhance the Guiding effects."

Answer 39 : So far the utility of TA has been relatively small. This utility can be increased by better incorporating TA into European regulations. Utility can also manifest itself at regional level. Adherence to TA priorities can be an important argument for the regions in their discussions with the central authorities of individual countries (where we see centralistic tendencies, such as Poland)."

Answer 42 : "The Territorial Agenda is useful to promote the European vision for territorial development, but its goals are currently not sufficiently considered in relevant EU policies. To achieve a stronger link between the TA and the work of the EU institution, a general and mandatory territorial impact assessment is needed for all legislative proposals. Furthermore, the clear link between ESIF and the TA should remain one of the priorities of the renewed TA."

Answer 59 : "There is potential but it will need strong and lasting efforts"

Answer 63 : "As a framework it is good, but it could benefit more from being more flexible to incorporate the feedback of the users/participants as it starts with its implementation."

Summary of the key findings of utility

Overall, respondents' opinion about utility of the TAEU is positive. Majority sees it as a useful framework and main concerns are linked to operationalisation of the TAEU. Some respondents were more sceptical about its utility, after all it is only a strategical document, there is much more to be done to achieve the objectives, more specifically concrete actions are needed. The TAEU's function as a common vision for European territorial development and increase of awareness of territorial issues and dimension of policies are central aspects of the utility. Thus, many respondents had realistic picture about the utility of the TAEU as a strategic document.

5.5. Roles of the agenda and stakeholders

This section is based on two questions: 14) *How would you describe the role of the renewed Territorial Agenda in achieving territorial cohesion in Europe?* and 20) *What is your role in putting the renewed TA into practise?* Main findings of the analysis are collected in the following tables after level of governance and followed by a summary of the key findings.

5.5.1. Role of the renewed Territorial Agenda in achieving territorial cohesion in Europe

National Governments

Respondents from national governments described role of the renewed TAEU as being coordination, a framework or vision for European territories and a tool to unleash territorial capital. Also, instrumentalization of the TAEU was cited as important aspect of the new TAEU in comparison to the old agendas. Some respondents argued that role is modest due to the non-binding nature of the policy. The TAEU was seen as a guiding document for implementation, but there is not an actual program to implement it, some mentioned Cohesion funds as potential enablers of this. As the following response 52 illustrates, promotion of the TAEU to other policy sectors and acceptance of the agenda is crucial for achieving territorial cohesion.

Answer 52: "The renewed TA should be framed for all actions lead at different level aiming at achieving territorial cohesion. TA 2020+ could deliver us some main guidelines and define joint objective of the work. It should strongly influence the CP 2021-27 to be more territorially oriented, not only during its preparation but during implementation in particular. TA 2020+ should be an on-going process, putting together many best practices and examples of delivery mechanisms. We cannot write only general sentence, how we'll achieve the TC, for people from other sectors they mean nearly nothing. Only by designing concrete procedure, delivering many examples from different sectors we can enclose us to our goals."

National Agency

There was only one response in this group, which emphasized the TAEU' role as a framework and vision that citizens share. Thus, embodying the idea of social imaginary.

Regional Authorities

Respondents mentioned role of the TAEU in achieving territorial cohesion being mainly visible through its function as a guideline for those who work with developmental policies. It should be introduced for national authorities and all of those who work in territorial cohesion related themes. The TAEU content is wide and it addresses many challenges of Europe, as respondents mentioned, and it is an important framework for European territories to overcome current challenges. However, some were pessimistic about its role since it remains as low politics of the EU.

Local Authorities

The following answers illustrates how some are not sure about the non-binding nature of the agenda as the answer 3 illustrates and some had realistic insights about the role of the TAEU as the answer 21 shows. Other mentioned that it is a guideline for sharing good practices (mentioned 3 times in the responses).

Answer 3: "As a main (obligatory?) document to implement."

Answer 21: "It's our best action to achieve our aims."

European Commission

Respondents from the EC mentioned that linkages to other sectoral policies and bigger strategies such as the Green Deal are important for the role. Likewise, the role as a guideline for implementation for the other national and sub-national authorities was mentioned.

European organizations

Respondents from this group argued that linkages to other policies and programmes are important, because the TAEU is not the only policy having impact on territorial cohesion. As the following answer 46 illustrates the competence issue is acknowledged and importance of the cohesion policy and funds in the background of the TAEU are crucial for its role.

Answer 46: "The Territorial Agenda sets some key principles for territorial development and spatial planning policies. Those are not competencies of the EU but of Member States, therefore ensuring consistency between the different territorial or regional development policies across Europe can be a key factor to enhance connections and cooperation between places (within and across Member States). The approach and principles set in the Territorial Agenda can and should also influence the EU Cohesion policy which is the 2nd most important policy of the EU and is critical for local and regional development and territorial cohesion."

Others

Respondents from other group highlighted role of the renewed TAEU in shaping other policies such as Cohesion Policy and Common Agriculture Policy. It functions as a framework, guideline and background document for balanced development and policy harmonisation in various levels of governance. Some respondents express their doubts in this by using words ‘it should be’, ‘it can be’ and ‘we will see’. Some were even sceptic about its role as the answer 25 illustrates. Moreover, the answer 53 is well in line with the theoretical assumption that social imaginaries are subjective and dependent of personal understanding of the concept. Also, it illustrates the issue of many meanings and dimension of territorial cohesion which is its weakness and at the same time strength as some authors argue.

Answer 25: "I have a big problem with that. TA 2030 has no clear message that its predecessors had. It is a pity that knowledge from the process of work on its assumptions was wasted. I do not know why...."

Answer 53: "Unfortunately, territorial cohesion is a multifaceted category which is defined and understood differently. With my definition I presented earlier in this questionnaire, the role of the TA will certainly rely upon how expected territorial utility is being aggregated and reflected by decision makers at different levels of governmental administration."

Summary of the key finding of role of the TAEU

In general, the respondents described the TAEU’s role being a framework, guideline and background document for balanced development and achieving territorial cohesion. Several weaknesses were indicated such as many meanings and elusiveness of the concept. Also, the non-binding nature was

acknowledged, which explains the role being mainly as sharing good practices and necessity to connect it to other policies. Some respondents were more pessimistic about its role and capacity to deliver to territorial cohesion, but others highlighted the soft mechanism of delivery linked to Europeanisation of spatial planning and territorial development policies. These findings are well in line with the theoretical background of Europeanisation and the open method of coordination policy mechanism. Some of the respondents related the TAEU's role in social imaginary, which indicates that the TAEU embodies a common vision for development of the EU shared by citizens. However, other respondents were concerned that the TAEU lacks as vision and that it can be understood in many ways since the definition of territorial cohesion remains unclear.

5.5.2. Stakeholders' role in putting in practice the TAEU 2030

<i>National Governments</i>
Respondents from this group mentioned their role being related to promotion and informing of the TAEU in national contexts. Moreover, policy coordination, harmonisation and implementation of the TAEU in national policies were mentioned several times. Also, participating in elaboration of the document and continuation of usual activities in the networks of territorial cohesion were mentioned too.
<i>National Agency</i>
Respondent from this group mentioned that they will continue as before, conserving the same projects.
<i>Regional Authorities</i>
Regional authorities mentioned that they will implement the TAEU and harmonise policies and strategies under their competence with the TAEU. In addition, communication and informing other stakeholders were mentioned as their role of putting in practice the agenda. Some mentioned interest in participating into actions and pilots mentioned in the agenda. Some did not know what their role will be.
<i>Local Authorities</i>
Couple of local authorities argued that their role is small, but they will try to implement the TAEU and make sure that the projects in their competence are in line with the goals of the TAEU, as the response 3 illustrates. Informing and motivating local actors were mentioned as their role in putting in practice the TAEU. One mentioned participating in this questionnaire as being one practice where they have a role.

<i>Answer3 : “Not the big one, I'm afraid. Hope I'll be able to put in practice renewed TA in my everyday work on local level.”</i>
<i>European Commission</i>
Respondents from the EC mentioned their role putting in practice of the TAEU being such activities as policy support, creating networks for cooperation, sharing information and increasing awareness of the TAEU and territorial cohesion and management of territorial programmes.
<i>European organizations</i>
Respondents mentioned their role in putting in practice of the TAEU as promoting the agenda and disseminating information in their networks and creating spaces for discussion.
<i>Others</i>
Respondents from this group mentioned scientific research, consulting and policy advising as their role in putting in practice the TAEU. Moreover, assisting in developing and putting in practice the pilots were mentioned. Promotion of the agenda and increase of awareness of it in national networks were mentioned too. Cooperation with authorities and policymakers in the local and regional level were cited by many. Some were afraid of having a small role or not sure what their role will be.

Summary of the key finding of stakeholder's role

In general level, responses indicated that most of the stakeholders have some role in putting in practices of the TAEU. Roles were mainly related on promotion of the agenda and communicating it to other relevant stakeholders. The OMC related practices such as policy coordination, harmonisation and implementing the agenda into national policies were common activities too. Scientific research and policy recommendations were common practice for the other group which includes mainly respondents with academic background. Some respondents were not sure about their role and some were afraid that their role is small or non-existent. However, the stakeholders have mainly positive attitude towards implementing the agenda in means of Europeanisation of regional development and spatial planning. Mostly, they saw themselves as having role in putting in practice the agenda, thus working as agencies for Europeanisation.

5.6. Validity of the research

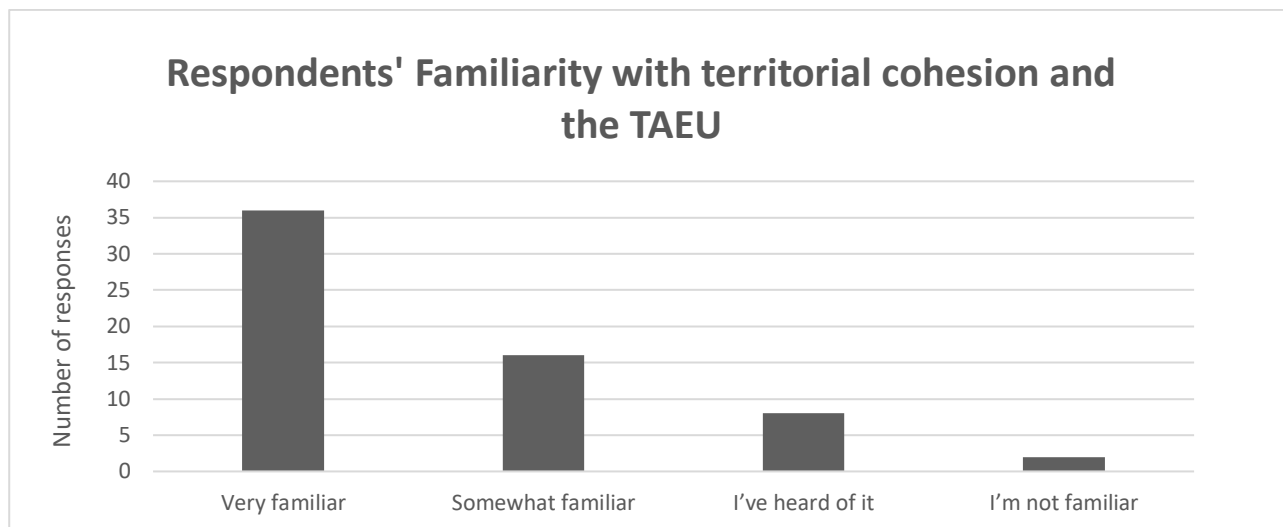


Figure 12: Participants' familiarity with territorial cohesion and the TAEU, source: Mervi Hemminki, 2020

Stakeholders' familiarity of territorial cohesion and the TAEU gives indications about validity of the research. It would be inconvenient ask about the topic from people who are not familiar with it, luckily this was not the case, instead 84 % of the respondents were 'very familiar' or 'somewhat familiar' with territorial cohesion and the TAEU as the figure 12 illustrates. Moreover, 13% of respondents have heard about it and 3% or only 2 respondents indicated not being familiar with territorial cohesion and the TAEU. Thus, stakeholders were rather familiar with the topic and, thus it is relevant to interrogate them about the topic.

6. Discussion

This section is composed of four chapters which are answers to the research questions, other interesting observations, policy recommendations and concluding remarks of the thesis.

6.1. Answers to the research questions and hypotheses

The stakeholders define territorial cohesion as balanced development, equal chances and less inequalities, thus **embodying the imaginary of cohesive Europe**. In addition, territorial approach and cooperation are central definers of the concept. Other interesting meanings are shared values, common goals and idea of territorialisation of the political community. These can be considered as components of the imaginary associated into territorial cohesion and the TAEU. Considering on the geopolitical imaginary of the Europe, the stakeholders perceive territoriality of the EU through relational and networked understanding of the space. The EU is seen by the majority of stakeholders as one unit and taken for granted, since the stakeholders do not question this.

The stakeholders associated sustainable and socially cohesive Europe into territorial cohesion. The stakeholders perceive the TAEU as a political guideline with future oriented guidelines for territorial development and cohesive Europe. The TAEU embodies the imaginary of cohesive Europe, but based on the survey, it seems that the stakeholders see the TAEU rather as a strategical document for guiding other policies or being guided by other policies, instead of being **the policy** to put in practice for achieving a cohesive Europe. The stakeholders share a reasonably common understanding of territorial cohesion and actions that could be done for achieving territorial cohesion, thus a common imaginary, which makes it possible to act together.

In general, there are some differences in defining territorial cohesion but, the results indicate that there is some kind of common understanding of the concept because the same themes are repeated in the responses. Thus, the hypothesis about this is correct. There are some differences in meaning of territorial cohesion and European territoriality, but the results do not show any strong evidence that this could be explained by the level of governance. The results considering on the role, impact, effectiveness and utility illustrate even clearer that variation in the responses cannot be explained by the level of governance.

I argue that there is something else for example, personal preferences and subjective opinions on the European integration that could explain these variations. In addition, the stakeholders who participated in the survey are well aware of the TAEU and territorial cohesion, and they work mainly in the fields of territorial/urban planning and development policy, where the EU networks are active. I argue that the stakeholders are familiar with the TAEU and might be even part of the EU circles of cohesion policy, thus **part of the epistemic community who shares the same ‘elite’ vision**. Therefore, it is logical that they understand the concept in the same way and believe in the extra value of the TAEU. There is even more variation in the responses of the other group, which supports the hypothesis that those with greater distance with the EU networks of spatial planning and regional development have different visions and understandings of the TAEU and territorial cohesion.

The hypothesis of modest expectations in effectiveness, impact, utility and role are mainly wrong. Despite the facts that the TAEU is a non-binding policy document and implementation is based on the open-method-of-coordination, **effectiveness, impacts, utility and role of the TAEU are expected to be strong**. Minority of the stakeholders are realistic and pessimistic and expect fair and weak effectiveness, impacts and utility for the TAEU. The hypothesis about Europeanisation and the OMC related **soft means** are correct, stakeholders argued them **being ways to achieve the policy objectives**. However, the answers related to effectiveness, impacts and utility remain in general level and they do not convince that territorial cohesion can be achieved only by implementing the TAEU. **The TAEU is a general guideline** for stakeholders to be implemented indirectly by harmonizing other policies with it.

6.2 Contextualising the most interesting observations

In this section I present the most interesting observations and contextualize them with the current context of the EU politics and literature.

1. Change of paradigm: from economic competitiveness to promoting sustainable and inclusive development?

Findings from the section 5.2. *meaning of territorial cohesion* indicate that there has been a shift from economically oriented paradigm to more environmentally and socially sensitive paradigm. I assume that this can be explained by the launching context of the European Green deal and Just transition Fund. Moreover, recent academic research of Weckroth & Moisio (2020) on territorial cohesion

proposes similar changes for territorial cohesion policy by introducing concepts of spatial justice and well-being.

In addition, the answer 24 in the section 5.4.2 *how these impacts are achieved*, support this hypothesis that such initiatives as the multi-annual framework and Green Deal will affect content of the TAEU, and other programmes and policies have roles in delivering to the TAEU objectives. The European Green Deal came up many times along the survey responses in several questions. Moreover, themes such as equal chances, solidarity, balanced development and economic cohesion were well present in definitions of territorial cohesion. Thus, the environmental and social dimensions of territorial cohesion were prioritized instead of the economic dimension (if understood in terms of economic competitiveness). I think it is possible to argue that the imaginary of sustainable and cohesive Europe is the most popular ‘elite’ vision to be promoted currently in the EU politics, which makes it logical that this imaginary is visible at the renewal context of the TAEU (see e.g. Von der Leyen, 2019).

Findings from the section 5.4.1.1 *expected impact in improving the EU economic competitiveness* are strong in general, even this aspect was not present in the meanings of territorial cohesion. However, compared to territorial and environmental dimensions, expected impacts in economic cohesion are rather modest. This supports the previous idea of change in orientation towards environmental and social cohesions as the most important aspects of territorial cohesion and the TAEU. However, impacts in some social themes like unemployment are also expected to be modest which means that there is still some reservations regarding the impacts.

2. Relational and networked understanding of European spatiality

Stakeholders have a common understanding and acceptance of European territoriality as a spatial unit based on their responses of defining the targeted territories of the TAEU. The respondents do not argue that the European territory do not exist or that it would be only sum of member states’ sovereign territories. Instead, the relational and networked understanding of space are emphasized, and the EU is seen as an existing unit. This can be proved by the fact that respondent mention that all kind of territories are targeted, and that a strict definition is not needed. However, fuzzy borders and overlapping scales may indicate that the EU space is not clearly defined unit, rather the EU space is seen as evolving space depending on performed actions. Thus, this links the EU spatiality to a Europeanisation process of spatial planning and regional development.

Disagreements are found in defining territories based on administrative boundaries, some think that they are spatial units and some think that they should not be used as basis for defining the EU territoriality. I reflect this to the issue of defining geopolitical subjects and objects of territorial cohesion. The question is, who are the subjects putting in practice the TAEU and who are the objects of these actions to be affected? Administrative territories may be both, but they are not the only possible subjects and objects. Without people, social relations and practices spaces are just portions of land, therefore understanding space as a social construction is needed (see e.g. Del Biaggio, 2015). Moreover, networks and process of Europeanisation create European territoriality, and it depends on actors and agency if this happens.

3. A Useful framework with high expectations

Strongest impacts of the TAEU are expected in climate change adaptation and mitigation and achieving territorial cohesion. A central finding is that expected impact on economic competitiveness divides respondents between strong and weak expected impacts and increase of economic competitiveness is not mentioned as a definer of territorial cohesion. Environmental and social equality are emphasized, which can be explained by strategical orientations of Ursula Von der Leyen's commission, which are climate neutral Europe by the 2050, *'just transition that leaves nobody behind and economy that works for people: social fairness and prosperity'* (Von der Leyen, 2019). Logically, the TAEU priorities are similar with the von der Leyen's political guideline for the 2019-2024, which is the most important political agenda guiding other EU policies.

Expected impacts in all themes are strong or fair according to the majority of respondents. In all themes, there were some respondents waiting weak impacts, which indicates that all respondents do not believe that the TAEU will achieve the expected impacts, however this is a small minority of stakeholders. However, when asked how the impacts are achieved the responses remain in general level refereeing simply to implementation without very specific examples. Soft practices are mentioned such as coordinating other policies, promoting the agenda and sharing good practices.

Utility of the TAEU divides respondents to those who are optimistic, realistic and pessimistic about it. Majority of the stakeholders are positive and perceive the framework as a very useful agenda, just waiting to be put in practice. Some are realistic or pessimistic about the utility

because they acknowledged that implementation is the main weakness which remains to be solved. At this point of the renewal process, there were only 4 pilots mentioned in stage of vague ideas and not really any concrete proposals for the implementation, which may explain these minor reservations. Here also, some stakeholders mentioned that the TAEU is a common vision for European territorial development and it is useful, because it increases awareness of territorial dimensions of policymaking.

Effectiveness of the TAEU divides stakeholders, some expect it to be good, some are unsure, and some doubted it. Responses highlight that acceptance of the agenda, promotion and engaging national actors in putting it in practice as important aspect of effectiveness. Political will and political status of the agenda are also central factors for effectiveness. Moreover, the agenda is not perceived as the only way to achieve the goals, other policies, programs and funds could be linked it and increase its effectiveness. Respondents acknowledged well the issues and weaknesses of effectiveness.

Overall expectations in effectiveness, impact and utility show that there is some uncertainty of the delivery mechanism of the TAEU. If we look at the expectations, they refer to concrete actions and implementation, however due to the OMC results are more likely to be linked to soft means and to Europeanisation processes. Moreover, when asked about the role of the TAEU stakeholders mainly refer to such activities as sharing good practices, increasing awareness of territorial approach, cooperation and coordination. Thus, the Europeanisation of spatial planning and regional development networks is possible means for achieving territorial cohesion.

4. Implementation of the agenda as a process of Europeanisation?

Expected impacts, effectiveness utility and role of the TAEU reflected to the OMC and such soft tools and activities as sharing good practices, promotion of the TAEU, learning process, cooperation and coordination, synergies and linking the TAEU to other policies. Thus, stakeholders are willing to work as the EU agencies and to put in practice the TAEU, which embodies social and geopolitical imaginaries of the EU. This can be understood as a process of Europeanisation, which creates spaces of and for Europeanisation, where these EU visions can be circulated. However, it is impossible to say beforehand what kind of imaginaries are circulated in these spaces of and for Europeanisation. In general, the survey results indicate that the imaginary of cohesive Europe promoted through the TAEU and concept of territorial cohesion are accepted amongst the stakeholders. Thus, in theory they

may be potential actors for promoting this elite vision of cohesive Europe to be shared by larger group of people.

Moreover, the role of the TAEU's in achieving territorial cohesion is perceived as strong according to the majority of stakeholders. Still, some of the stakeholders are not convinced that the role is strong, some of them are more realistic or even pessimistic waiting the role to be rather modest or weak. Furthermore, the general spirit is expectant, at this stage of the renewal process it is hard to say a lot about the future. Outcomes depend on operationalisation and implementation of the TAEU.

The OMC mechanism and nature of the TAEU as a non-binding policy explain why the role of the TAEU relays on Europeanisation. Stakeholders work as agencies for putting in practices the agenda. Moreover, when asked about the role of the TAEU itself, stakeholders perceived it as a good framework and background document for territorial cohesion. However, many respondents acknowledged that there is still much more to be done to achieve its objectives and allocated resources remain insufficient. The document itself it is not enough to achieve the objectives; it is the agency that is needed as actors in putting in practice the agenda and it depends on the actors involved what kind of space of and for Europeanisation are produced. Majority of the stakeholders expresses their will to engage in such practices and thus work as an EU agency.

The research gives an overall picture of the TAEU renewal process as a process of Europeanisation, but this does not happen by itself, agencies are needed. Defining the central concepts and policy evaluation questions permitted to gain overall picture, what is ought to be done by territorial cohesion policy and by the central political agenda, the TAEU. Moreover, the research gives some insight what is to come after the adoption of the agenda, but what is actually done and achieved depends on agencies and political willingness and engagement of stakeholder in implementation. Views of this look quite promising, since majority of the participants are willing to implement the agenda, which creates opportunities of and for Europeanisation. However, territorial cohesion policy and the TAEU are not only policies aiming for the just and green Europe, but other policies also such as the European Green Deal have more important role and real capability to achieve these goals. The timeline for the TAEU is next ten years. Therefore, a follow-up research in a few years could be interesting topic for further research.

6.3. Policy recommendations

I propose the following policy recommendations.

1. Promotion of the TAEU and engaging stakeholders from various levels and scales

As I have highlighted in the previous chapters, effectiveness and impacts of the agenda depends on the stakeholders who work as actors and agencies. Their willingness and engagement in the implementation are crucial for achieving the objectives. Also, implementation of the TAEU was seen the main weakness of the agenda, therefore this aspect should be developed further. For example, stakeholders did not mention the planned pilot actions as ways to implement the agenda. Hence, the final six pilot actions should be promoted, and new initiatives created. Also, by mainstreaming of the agenda and adoption of it by as many actors as possible are important practices for forming agencies for actions.

The content of the agenda is perceived coherent and the agenda is accepted by majority of the participants, which is a good start. Also, meanings of the central concepts are understood relatively similar by the stakeholders, which makes it possible to act together when there is a common goal and the imaginary of cohesive Europe. However, the economic dimension of cohesion was not present in definers of territorial cohesion, which may indicate that the concept remains still somewhat elusive.

2. Participatory approach and hybrid governance

I propose including a participatory approach in the implementation of the TAEU to better engage third sector and local people, because roles of the third sector and European citizens were not present in the survey responses. The imaginary of cohesive Europe includes both equal chances for people and places. Therefore, both should participate in implementation of the TAEU. Also, engagement of private sector could be enforced. Real actions and engagement outside the expert circles of territorial cohesion and regional development are needed, which can be done for example by means of hybrid governance.

3. Increase political relevance of the TAEU?

To achieve the Green and Just Europe objectives, the political status of the TAEU in the EU's general political agenda might be too low for achieving these ambitious objectives. If the agenda would gain greater importance or become an official EU policy the objectives would be much more realistic. Also, by ratification of the agenda, there would be more means and resources to put in practice the agenda. However, as results of the study show it is possible to deliver to these goals by soft tools and by the OMC.

The same policy objectives are already in the EU's other agendas such as European Green Deal and Just transition Fund, which might be more realistic policy initiatives to achieve the goals due to their binding nature and the EU's competence. The TAEU is characterized as a general guideline for cohesive Europe which is a very ambitious goal. It cannot be achieved only by acting in the field of territorial cohesion policy, therefore mainstreaming the TAEU and engaging other policy sectors are recommendable. One option could be inclusion of the TAEU objectives as criteria for cohesion fund allocations to increase political importance of the agenda indirectly.

6.4. Concluding remarks of the thesis

Master's thesis is the first independent research project for many students, as it was for me. It is meant for specializing in a certain field of geography and learning how to do a scientific research. Indeed, through my thesis and internship, I have gained both theoretical and practical understanding of European regional politics and cooperation. Strengths of my study include a diverse theoretical understanding of the topic and understanding how the EU's non-binding policy works. Moreover, the subject is topical, and findings of the research may offer valuable knowledge for amendments of the TAEU framework and implementation. In addition, the survey offered possibility to give the voice for those who would not have normally participated in the EU policymaking. The collected data were rich and coherent for my research.

However, this is also one of the weaknesses of the study. I slightly overestimated my capability of analyse the data, a smaller number of questions would have been enough for the purpose of master's thesis research. I could have narrowed the research better, but one of my main aim was to do a research that can be useful and interesting for the policymakers and officials in charge of the TAEU. Thus, I stand by my choices, even the writing process took longer than expected. Furthermore,

62 stakeholders participated in the study, which is not probably enough for generalizing these results considering all the potential actors who are invited to put in practice the TAEU in the EU. However, as the background variables illustrated the participants of the survey come from various levels, scales and countries. Thus, the data were relevant for the research objectives.

As I mentioned before, the master's thesis research is for learning, and indeed I have learnt a lot about spatial planning, political geography, Europeanisation and European soft policies. Also, seeing the strengths and weaknesses of my research process is valuable for the next research to avoid repeating the same 'mistakes'. Overall, the journey to European cohesion policy and territorial development literature and policy circles have been joyful and instructive.

7. Acknowledgements

First, I must mention that research is an individual research project performed at the university of Helsinki, the views expressed in this master's thesis are those of the author, based on the survey, and do not represent the Ministry of the Environment of Finland.

Secondly, I thank all the participants of the survey for their time, interest and input in my study. I really hope that I managed to give the voice for you and bring some interesting insights for improving the EU's territorial cohesion policy and the TAEU.

Thirdly, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to do the survey in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment. Moreover, I am grateful for supportive attitude of my supervisors and co-workers Olli Maijala & Juhana Rautiainen at the Ministry of the Environment. Also, I am thankful for all the support of my academic supervisors Sami Moisio & Juho Luukkonen at the university of Helsinki. Also, I thank all my friends and family for supporting me during this journey.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I would like to thank Kanslianeuvos Kaarlo Koskimies & Irma Koskimies for awarding me with a master's thesis–research grant, which was of great importance for me.

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9. Annexes

Annex 1: Questionnaire sheet

Questionnaire Regarding the Revision of the Territorial Agenda 2020 of the EU

The Purpose of the Questionnaire

The Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union is committed to progress the renewal of the Territorial Agenda 2020 in an open and engaging way. The renewed agenda will be adopted by the ministers responsible for territorial cohesion, during the German Presidency at the end of 2020. Now is the perfect time to submit your ideas for the renewal.

The survey is divided in two sections A and B. Section A is the official survey of the Finnish Presidency. The intention of section A is to inform stakeholders of the renewal process of the Territorial Agenda and collect feedback for the further development of the Territorial Agenda. Section B is a scientific survey, which will be used in a master's thesis study on the role of Territorial Agenda in achieving territorial cohesion in Europe. The intention of the thesis is to study how stakeholders at different scales see the role of the renewed Territorial Agenda and what are expectations on effectiveness, impact and utility. Section A is composed of questions 1 to 11. Section B is composed of questions 12 to 20.

All responses will be handled according to EU General Data Protection Regulations. Collected information of section A will be stored by the Finnish Presidency for the duration of the development of the new Territorial Agenda until the end of 2020. Stored information will be analyzed for the further development of the new Territorial Agenda and for scientific research purposes relating to the master's thesis.

Please submit your answers no later than 31 January 2020. For any further information, please contact -- (firstname.lastname@ym.fi) of the Ministry of the Environment. For further reading on the renewal, please visit <https://territorialagenda.eu/renewal.html>

Background Information on the Renewal of the Territorial Agenda

The Romanian Presidency, at the first half of 2019, collected feedback on the strategic scope and political embedding of the agenda. Most notably the renewal aims to: 1) Promote a place-based and a more functional approach in policy making across the EU, 2) Gain political commitment for the territorial dimension, 3) Ensure better alignment with the new Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda for the EU, 4) Ensure connections with Cohesion Policy, 5) Enhance the use of territorial dimension within the European Semester, 6) Contribute to a better understanding of the notion of Territorial Cohesion and of its priorities. The meeting of Directors-General Responsible for Territorial Cohesion (DGTC), 16 October 2019, agreed on proposing the following main challenges and main priorities of the renewed agenda.

To achieve

1. **A JUST EUROPE** that offers future perspectives for all people and places we need:

1a. BALANCED EUROPE: Better balanced territorial development and less inequalities in Europe

1b. FUNCTIONAL REGIONS: Local and regional development and less inequalities between places

1c. INTEGRATION BEYOND BORDERS: Living and working across borders

To achieve

2. **A GREEN EUROPE** that protects our common livelihoods and shapes societal transition processes we need:

2a. HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: Better ecological livelihoods and climate-neutral towns, cities and regions

2b. CIRCULAR ECONOMY: Strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world

2c. SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS: Sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places

For further reading on these, please refer to the current proposal at <https://territorialagenda.eu/renewal.html>

The priorities are intended to be achieved by national, regional and local authorities working together between different member states with a plurality of separate and joint actions in the fields of cohesion policy, strategic territorial development and planning, urban development and planning, as well as

other sectoral policies (e.g. energy, transport and communication policy). Objectives and priorities of the proposed Territorial Agenda (see picture below).



Section A Background information

Q1) Which organizational level do you work with?

- National Government
- National Agency
- Regional Authority
- Local Authority
- European Commission, which one
- An EU institution, which one
- European organization, which one
- Other, please specify

Q2) Select your country if applicable

* If your organization is not specifically representing a certain country please use option "other".

Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (HR), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Greece (EL), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Malta (MT),

Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovakia (SK), Slovenia (SI), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), Switzerland (CH), United Kingdom (UK), Other, please specify

Q3) Which sector do you mainly represent?

- Cohesion policy
- Economic and financial policy
- Territorial/urban planning and development policy
- Transportation policy
- Social policy
- Agricultural policy
- Environmental policy
- Other, please specify

Q4) At which geographical scale do you mainly work with?

- global
- EU wide
- macro-regional
- transnational/cross-border
- national
- regional
- local

Q5) How familiar are you with territorial cohesion and the EU Territorial Agenda?

I'm not familiar / I've heard of it / somewhat familiar / Very familiar

Section A: Priorities of the renewed Territorial Agenda

The two objectives of the proposed Territorial Agenda are A JUST EUROPE that offers future perspectives for all places and people and A GREEN EUROPE that protects our common livelihoods and shapes societal transition.

Please refer to the current proposal --.

Q6) Please rank the following proposed priorities of the Territorial Agenda in order of importance from 1st = most important to 6th = least important of the priorities

BALANCED EUROPE: Better balanced territorial development and less inequalities in Europe	1st
	2nd
	3rd
	4th
	5th
	6th
FUNCTIONAL REGIONS: Local and regional development and less inequalities between places	1st
	2nd
	3rd
	4th
	5th
	6th
INTEGRATION BEYOND BORDERS: Living and working across borders	1st
	2nd
	3rd
	4th
	5th
	6th
HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: Better ecological livelihoods and climate-neutral towns, cities and regions	1st
	2nd
	3rd
	4th
	5th
	6th

Please, elaborate:

Section A: Engagement of Different Stakeholders

To achieve the main goal of the proposed Territorial Agenda “a better future for all”, the main challenges and priorities of future EU territorial development will need

1. strong policy actions,
2. projects at different levels of governance and sectors.

The application of the Territorial Agenda relies on informal multilevel cooperation where Member States, sub-national authorities, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Union’s Advisory Bodies (CoR, EESC), the EIB and other relevant players make their contribution.

The priorities spelled out in the Territorial Agenda need to be supported by actions carried out by committed players. Only then the priorities of the Territorial Agenda can be addressed appropriately. To inspire actions all around Europe, the forthcoming German EU Presidency invites all Member States and interested parties to initiate pilot actions to be launched together with the agenda to strengthen

- the territorial coordination of policies;
- territorial cohesion at EU level;
- territorial cohesion at cross-border, transnational and interregional level;
- Member States' contribution to territorial cohesion

Q7) In which of the six proposed priorities would you like to see a pilot project? You may choose up to three.

- BALANCED EUROPE: Better balanced territorial development and less inequalities in Europe
- FUNCTIONAL REGIONS: Local and regional development and less inequalities between places
- INTEGRATION BEYOND BORDERS: Living and working across borders
- HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: Better ecological livelihoods and climate-neutral towns, cities and regions
- CIRCULAR ECONOMY: Strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world
- SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS: Sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places

Q8) What actions or projects are ongoing or planned in your organization that you recognize relate to the six priorities of the Territorial Agenda? Please describe maximum three projects.

Q9) What is foremost needed to achieve the priorities of the Territorial Agenda? You may choose up to three.

- Better funding
- Cooperation between different levels and sectors
- Capacity building, networking and sharing best practices
- EU level regulation
- Territorial cooperation

- Other, please specify

Q10) What are the main constraints for achieving the objectives of the TA?

Q11) How do you see the future of European territories? (choose one)



Section B: Master's thesis research

Dear participant,

the following section of the survey is composed by 9 questions and it is intended to collect information for the master's thesis study on the territorial cohesion of the EU. The aim is to study how stakeholders at different scales see the role of the renewed Territorial Agenda in achieving territorial cohesion and what are expectations on effectiveness, impact and utility of the renewed Territorial Agenda. The study is conducted by the trainee of FI Presidency, Mervi Hemminki who is a master's student in geography at the University of Helsinki. Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary.

If you would like to be further interviewed on the topic for the master's thesis, you may submit your contact information via the link on the last page of the survey. The personal contact information will be handled separately from the answers of this questionnaire and used solely for the master's thesis further contacts.

Your time and participation on this research are much appreciated!

For further information of this research please contact

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Do you want to continue to section B?

Yes, continue to section / No, end the questionnaire

Q12) How would you define "Territorial Cohesion"?

Q13) How would you define the "territories", which the Territorial Agenda aims to influence?

Q14) How would you describe the role of the renewed Territorial Agenda in achieving territorial cohesion in Europe?

* role= the purpose or use that something usually is expected to have in a situation (Cambridge Dictionary)

Q15) In relation to content of the renewed Territorial Agenda (TA), do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

I Economic dimension *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Unable to answer
a) the renewed TA is a highly economically motivated agenda *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Economic objectives are in balance with other objectives of the renewed TA *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) the renewed TA aims to improve European economic competitiveness *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

II Social dimension *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Unable to answer
a) the renewed TA aims to promote solidarity between European citizens *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) the renewed TA aims to strengthen European identity and culture *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) the renewed TA aims to increase quality of life in EU *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

IV Environmental dimension *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Unable to answer
a) the renewed TA aims to minimize negative environmental impacts of sectoral policies *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) the renewed TA aims to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) the renewed TA aims for environmentally sustainable Europe *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

V Spatial planning dimension *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Unable to answer
a) the renewed TA is a tool for a common EU-wide spatial planning *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) the renewed TA aims to coordinate national level spatial planning systems in Europe *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) the renewed TA focuses on sharing best practises of spatial planning between stakeholders *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please, elaborate any of the dimensions I, II, III or IV:

Q16) Please rank the following policy goals in order of importance for the renewed TAEU

Ranking from 1st= most important to 4th= least important policy goal for the renewed TA

Territorial cohesion	<input type="radio"/> 1st	Economic cohesion	<input type="radio"/> 1st
	<input type="radio"/> 2nd		<input type="radio"/> 2nd
	<input type="radio"/> 3rd		<input type="radio"/> 3rd
	<input type="radio"/> 4th		<input type="radio"/> 4th
Environmental cohesion	<input type="radio"/> 1st	Social cohesion	<input type="radio"/> 1st
	<input type="radio"/> 2nd		<input type="radio"/> 2nd
	<input type="radio"/> 3rd		<input type="radio"/> 3rd
	<input type="radio"/> 4th		<input type="radio"/> 4th

Q17) What are your expectations on the impact of the renewed TA on the following themes?

*Impact= a marked effect or influence on something (Cambridge Dictionary)

improving quality of government and governance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improving well-being of citizens	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improving employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
coordinating EU spatial planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improving connectivity & accessibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
achieving economic cohesion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improving EU economic competitiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improving services of general Interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing social inequalities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
overcoming demographic and societal challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
bringing EU closer to its citizens	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
improving climate change adaptation and mitigation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
achieving environmental sustainability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please elaborate, how these impacts are expected to be achieved?

Any other foreseen impacts, please specify what and how?

Q18) What you think about the utility of the Territorial Agenda as a framework for actions towards territorial cohesion?

* utility=the usefulness of something, especially in a practical way (Cambridge Dictionary)

Q19) What are your expectations for the effectiveness of the renewed TA in achieving territorial cohesion?

* effectiveness=the ability of something to be successful and produce the intended results
(Cambridge Dictionary)

Q20) What is your role in putting the renewed TA into practise?

Platform for submitting contact information

If you would like to be contacted and interviewed and/or sent information concerning the master's thesis, please submit your contact details via this link: --

The information provided via this link will not be connected to the answers of the questionnaire.
The information provided will be handled by the Master's thesis researcher Ms. Hemminki for the sole purpose of contacting respondents for further information or disseminating Master's thesis final results.